Being Present when Forced to be Absent: Understanding Mayan Families' Cross-border Relationships and Separation Experiences

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BEING PRESENT WHEN FORCED TO BE ABSENT: UNDERSTANDING MAYAN FAMILIES' CROSS-BORDER RELATIONSHIPS AND SEPARATION EXPERIENCES

Dissertation

by

RACHEL M. HERSHBERG

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Abstract

Being Present when *Forced* to be Absent:

Understanding Mayan Families’ Cross-border Relationships and Separation Experiences

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Dissertation Chair: M. Brinton Lykes

A growing number of families in the U.S. are of mixed-status with at least one undocumented relative who is threatened by deportation. Many also are simultaneously involved in cross-border or transnational families. Despite these challenging contexts, these families rarely are attended to in psychological research. This dissertation presents findings from research with nine intergenerational Maya K’iche’ transnational and mixed-status families who live across the United States and Guatemala. The study explored relationships within these families and how they are maintained in contexts of family separation as influenced by U.S. immigration and deportation systems.

A grounded theory analysis of in-depth interviews with at least one U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent, and one Guatemala-based child and caregiver from each family was developed to better understand and characterize the ways in which diverse family members perceive and experience their family relationships and separations. The middle-range theory developed from this study is called “being present when *forced* to be absent.” This theory describes the main strategies family members in Guatemala and the U.S. utilize to maintain relationships over time and across space, which include communication, remittances or financial support, and the provision of life advice or
Findings suggest that while these strategies mitigate challenges experienced in transnational family relationships, families view contextual strains in Guatemala and the U.S. as continuing to influence their cross-border relationships and family processes. Finally, this study showed that families leverage an additional strategy identified as *reconfiguring the transnational family*, wherein they alter the transnational configuration of their family to confront challenges of family separation.

This study shows that U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent(s) and children and elected caregivers in Guatemala contribute to their transnational families in unique ways. It also supports previous research arguing that immigration and deportation policies violate the rights of families from the global south who migrate north to support their relatives in origin countries. Implications for comprehensive immigration reform and new directions for research in psychology with migrant and transnational families are discussed.
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Chapter 1: Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Literature Review

I. Introduction

At the dawn of the 21st century, the number of migrants living in the United States is at an all time high, spanning hundreds of origin nations and approximately 245 language groups (see Cohn, 2012; Lewis, 2009). Despite the U.S.’s success at becoming a heterogeneous, innovative and productive nation, our immigration system is widely regarded as failed or broken by the American public (Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Massey & Sánchez, 2009). Of the approximately 40 million foreign-born individuals in the United States, who make up 12.9 percent of the total population, 11.2 million are estimated to be in the U.S. without permission from the U.S. government (López & López, 2010; Passel & Cohn, 2011). While estimates vary, recent reports suggest that approximately half of the unauthorized population include migrants who overstayed I-94 time limits on visas they received from the U.S. government, while the other half is comprised of migrants who entered the U.S. by crossing the U.S.-Mexico border without permission (Kanstroom, 2007; Nowrasteh, 2012; Passel, & Cohn, 2011). Of this group of migrants, 10 million are adults and two-thirds of them have lived in the U.S for at least 10 years (Taylor, Lopez, Passel, & Motel, 2011). These migrants make up 3.7% of the total U.S. population and 5.2% of its labor force (Passel & Cohn, 2011). While diverse in age, national origin, gender, and occupation, they are often categorized together pejoratively as the “illegal alien population” (Bibler Coutin, 2000; López & López, 2010).

The continual migration of individuals from, particularly, Mexico and Central America despite increased security on the U.S.-Mexico border—including a steel fence along 700 miles of the 2,000-mile-long border (Shiflett, 2010)—has become one of the
most powerful and divisive political and social issues of the 21st century (Kim, 2011; Massey & Sánchez, 2009). Instead of focusing discussions on how the sizable migrant population in the U.S. can be better incorporated into our society, or international factors causing migrants to risk their lives to cross the U.S. border and/or overstay the time limits on their legally acquired visas, the general public is concerned with reducing the “presence” of the undocumented population and strengthening border security (see, Kim, 2011; Massey & Sánchez, 2009).

Recently, the Obama administration has appeased those members of the American public concerned with curtailing undocumented migration, deporting 396,000 individuals from the United States between 2010-2011 (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2011). While it has been recorded that it costs approximately $23,000 to put each person through the deportation process, John Morton, the head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regards the exorbitantly high number of deportations this past year as “progress” made by the U.S. Government and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2011).

Statements like these have contributed to U.S. public opinion turning against migrants in general and Latinos in particular (Massey & Sánchez, 2009). They have also influenced the overwhelmingly negative reception that migrants to the U.S. experience (Massey & Sánchez, 2009). The increased enforcement by ICE in addition to the portrayal of Latin Americans as a threat to American society in the media and by political pundits such as Patrick Buchanan, has also led to an increase in the number of Americans over the last decade who view undocumented migrants as responsible for crime and terror occurring within our borders (Massey & Sánchez, 2009; Vazquez, 2011). Moreover,
punitive federal and state-level immigration policies have been proposed and enacted in the United States since the late 1990s that reflect these views and aim to reduce the rate of migration to the U.S. (see, e.g., Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Massey & Sánchez, 2009; Morse, Carter, Lawrence, & Segreto, 2012). While policies have been implemented to deter future undocumented migrations to the U.S., they have had the unintended consequences of decreasing the rate at which migrants are leaving the U.S. throughout the 21st century rather than reducing the rate of entry (Massey & Sánchez, 2009).

U.S. immigration policies have also had deleterious and unjust consequences for undocumented migrants in the U.S. and their family members, many of whom are U.S. citizens (Kanstroom, 2007; Menjívar, 2012). Over the last few years, for example, nearly half of the undocumented population identified, arrested, and deported through enforcement programs such as “Secure Communities” had no criminal convictions at the time of their arrest and had been living in the U.S. for many years without criminal records despite the program’s supposed aim of identifying the most violent migrants in the U.S. (Baum, Jones, & Berry, 2010; Kanstroom & Rosenbloom, 2009). Moreover, among the recently deported population are thousands of mothers and fathers whose U.S. citizen children remain in the U.S. after their parents’ deportations, including thousands who are taken into the foster care system (Wessler, 2011).

In spite of these consequences, and as the rate of individuals detained and deported continues to rise, migrants continue to journey north from the global south without visas or any form of “legal” authorization (Bryceson & Vuorula, 2003). On an annual basis, hundreds of thousands of migrants continue to find ways to cross heavily guarded borders between the U.S. and Mexico in search of labor and economic
opportunities in the U.S. (Bibler Coutin, 2011; Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). While the majority of border-crossers make it into the U.S. surreptitiously or experience deportation once on U.S. territory, thousands of migrants have also lost their lives while trying to cross into the U.S. (Bibler Coutin, 2011). As this dissertation will show, many migrants attempt the harrowing journey along the U.S.-Mexico border because of the challenging socioeconomic conditions facing their families in origin countries (De Genova, 2002; Massey & Sánchez, 2009; Schmalzbauer, 2005; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).

Despite the significant number of undocumented migrants living in and continually entering the U.S. in the face of heightened border security and an increasingly hostile climate of reception, U.S. politicians and the wider U.S. public have yet to agree on a tenable comprehensive immigration reform bill (Kim, 2011; Massey & Sánchez, 2009). As U.S. immigration policy currently stands, the more than 11 million undocumented migrants are effectively forced to remain “in the shadows,” evading institutions and individuals who pose potential threats to their settlement in the U.S. (Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2011; Brabec, Lykes, & Hershberg, 2011).

Complicating this reality further is the fact that many undocumented migrants are part of cross-border or transnational family networks. These transnational family configurations often include children and grandparents based in origin countries who are separated from U.S. based relatives for significant periods of time due to their relatives’ limited mobility in and between the U.S. and their origin nations (Menjívar, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Pottinger, 2005; Schmalzbauer, 2005; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). Recent research has also documented that in response to deportation practices
there is an increase in transnational families that include deported parents who were sent back to origin countries, and their spouses and U.S.-citizen children who remain in the U.S. (Hagan, Eschbach, & Rodriguez, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011).

Extant research with individuals in various configurations of transnational families has shown that when U.S.-based migrants are also part of transnational families, their daily living and sustenance is further strained by obligations to divide income between U.S. expenses and those experienced by relatives in origin countries (Brabeck et al., 2011; Castañeda, 2012; Hagan et al., 2008; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). Some of the limited empirical research exploring the economic experiences of transnational families reports that a majority of them are sending their wages back home to support relatives in origin countries on a regular basis, and some remit as much as 30% of their annual income (Castañeda, 2012; Hagan et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003, among others). These migrants continue to send money home while consistently occupying low socioeconomic status in the U.S. (Castañeda, 2012). This division of income can cause further stress for U.S.-based migrants from the global south, who often already experience financial difficulties related to exploitative employers and the low wages they receive for their labor in the U.S. (Castañeda, 2012; Gentsch & Massey, 2011; Massey & Pren, 2012).

While migrants remit to support relatives in origin countries, the combination of needing to remit while only having low-paying jobs available to them, with increasingly heightened border security, influences separation experiences between migrant parents in the U.S. and relatives in origin countries (Castañeda, 2012; Gentsch & Massey, 2011;
Massey & Gelatt, 2010; Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Menjivar, 2002). Specifically, research has shown that undocumented migrants in the U.S. are generally staying in the U.S. for longer durations than in past years because of increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexican border and the increasingly difficult legal constraints facing 21st century migrants (Dreby, 2010; Dreby & Stutz, 2012; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). The prolonged stay of migrants in the U.S often displeases relatives in origin countries as well as U.S. citizens who have little understanding of working migrants parents’ lives (Castañeda, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). While there is documentation of these significant financial strains in the lives of migrant families in the U.S., far less research has been conducted that simultaneously explores socio-emotional and psychological challenges related to transnational dimensions of family life and the role of sociopolitical factors, which together influence prolonged family separations for transnational, mixed-status families (Bibler Coutin, 2011; Castañeda, 2012; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).

In response to increases in detention and deportation rates over the last decades, scholars have begun investigating the socio-emotional challenges related to the U.S. sociopolitical climate, particularly in regards to how a parent’s undocumented status may influence the development of his or her U.S.-citizen children (e.g., Brabeck et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). This research has directed the attention of social scientists to the experiences of children and parents in these mixed-status families in the U.S. who frequently experience the threat or reality of detention and deportation (Brabeck et al., 2011; Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Yoshikawa, 2011). This work, as described below, has shown that these families experience “liminal
legality” wherein their mobility and interactions with U.S. institutions are necessarily restricted by their undocumented status and, yet, because of limited opportunities for legalizing their status they are forced to remain present but “legally absent” and unseen (Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2007, 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009).

Research in psychology with these mixed-status families suggests that as undocumented parents continue living in the U.S. and raising children in the U.S. despite their liminal status, they experience heightened stress, fear, and worry on a daily basis, and limited opportunities for increasing both individual and social capital (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Massey & Pren, 2012; Yoshikawa, 2011). Parents’ stressful experiences in the workplace, traveling between home and work, and in the home, have also been found to impact their children’s socio-emotional and cognitive development (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011).

Research has also shown that there are a significant number of children and adolescents who experience liminal legality in the U.S. (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Specifically, over one million youth are present in the U.S. without legal authorization (Chavez & Menjívar, 2010; Shah, 2008). These youth were brought over as infants or young children, or migrated independently at a young age (Shah, 2008). Regardless of how they entered the U.S., these youth experience limited opportunities once they graduate from high school and are effectively precluded from participating in prosperous economic sectors (Gonzalez, 2011; Shah, 2008;).

The challenges facing these youth in mixed-status families in the U.S. have motivated educators, psychologists, and social scientists, as well as migrants themselves, to advocate for pathways for legalizing their immigration status and, hence, presence in
the U.S. They argue that if members of the undocumented population were to have chances to “come out of the shadows,” they and their U.S.-born children would have better access to educational and health resources, and in the future, more pathways for contributing to the U.S. economy and engaging civically (Brabeck et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). Other scholars have argued that if undocumented migrants were granted chances to legalize their status, the rights of children and families in the U.S. would be better protected (Nessel, 2008).

Arguments nested in rights-based claims for children and adults in mixed-status families are a start in the right direction for comprehensive immigration reform (Bibler Coutin, 2011). This dissertation was developed, however, because these claims, and proposals for reform often ignore the reality that these families are also transnational families involved in cross-border relationships and family processes. The research that shows that the development of U.S. citizen children suffers when their parents occupy states of liminal legality is, thus, useful but simultaneously problematic. This work scarcely attends to the transnational contexts in which family processes and relationships occur, and often neglects to consider the additional children, spouses, and other relatives of mixed-status families who live and develop in origin countries while their loved ones labor in the U.S. If well-thought-out changes to our immigration and deportation policies are to be made in the near future for the sake of improving the social, political, and economic opportunities of mixed-status families in the U.S., and as a consequence, the U.S. economy as a whole, we must first develop holistic understandings of the realities in which these children and families are living. This reality is one occurring in a precarious socio-legal space as well as across global and/or transnational territories. We must ask
what consequences do our immigration and deportation systems have for families who are both mixed-status and transnational in the 21st century, and what type of reform is needed to improve the social, economic, and political conditions in which these complex families are living?

**Purpose of the study.** The purpose of this study is to begin to answer this question by exploring the influences of sociopolitical forces in the U.S. and internationally on a small sample of families who are both transnational and of mixed-status. It seeks to explore these phenomena with an indigenous migrant group, as research on migration and deportation experiences of ethno-linguistic minorities in the U.S. and transnationally is limited. Moreover, research with noncitizens who are also ethno-linguistic minorities suggest they may be the most adversely affected and exploited by punitive immigration and deportation policies in the U.S. (e.g., Brabeck et al., 2011; McKanders, 2010).

To investigate these topics, this research first explores family processes practiced within families who identify as being mixed-status and transnational. The data collected from members of participant families on which findings from this dissertation are based include perspectives of at least one child based in Guatemala, the child’s primary or secondary caregiver in Guatemala, and at least one of the child’s U.S.-based undocumented migrant parents, from each family. Research with these family members also attends to the resources and strategies members of families (whether based in the U.S. or Guatemala) utilize to maintain relationships in their transnational and mixed-status family contexts. It then examines how sociopolitical systems in the U.S., and particularly U.S. immigration and deportation policies and practices, negatively influence
or strain family relationships. This study finally explores how other aspects of context (i.e., social and historical conditions in Guatemala and the U.S.) and developmental characteristics of family members influence their cross-border family relationships.

Findings from this study inform current debates about comprehensive immigration reform as they evidence how family relationships and other aspects of family life for many of the millions of undocumented migrants in the U.S. and their relatives across borders are potentially threatened by deportation policies and the liminal legality families experience (Menjívar, 2012). Implications from this study specifically relate to how human rights for families within these systems can be better protected and enlarged should specific policy changes be implemented in the near future. It also poses questions regarding conceptions of citizenship in an ever-modernizing and globalizing world (Bloemraad, Kortweg, & Yurdakal, 2008; Menjívar, 2012).

**Research questions.** The main research questions for this study, pertaining to the nine transnational and mixed-status Maya K´iche´ families who participated in this research are:

1. What are some of the family processes in which undocumented Maya K´iche´ parent(s) based in the U.S., their children in Guatemala, and their children’s caregivers in Guatemala engage to maintain ties across borders and during varying periods of separation?

2. How do members of transnational, mixed-status families understand and make meaning of family separations and strains vis-à-vis socio-legal factors (i.e., undocumented status, deportation practices, limited mobility between U.S. and origin nations, limited work opportunities, among others)?
**Organization of the research.** Chapter 1 of this dissertation continues with an explanation of the theoretical approaches and framework (Section II) utilized to inform these research questions and develop this dissertation. After describing these approaches, a review of some of the literature (Section III) pertaining to the research questions and the population of participants is presented. This review enhanced my initial thinking about the dissertation process, and the main research questions that would be investigated through the research.

Chapter 2 describes the method of this dissertation in detail. In Section I, I explain the research approaches. I describe the research design and explain why I followed a constructivist grounded theory methodology. I also briefly describe some of the data collection and analysis steps followed in this dissertation, in keeping with a constructivist grounded theory methodology. In Section II, I describe the participants and explain why I chose to do research with Maya K’iche’ families as well as my own previous ties to members of this transnational population. Here I explain how these ties facilitated my entry into the communities in which I worked for this dissertation. Section III includes a description of the particular data collection plan I employed. After describing the data collection, I discuss the data analysis process in Section IV, including the sequential coding procedure utilized in grounded theory research and of the software program I relied on for this work. I conclude this entire chapter by providing background on my own researcher perspective, and information on the steps I took to increase the validity and rigor of this qualitative research study.

In Chapter 3, I present the findings from this dissertation. The chapter begins with a summary of the main findings and a description of the middle-range theory I developed
in this study. The chapter proceeds with in-depth discussions of the four main areas of results, which I divide into: 1. Findings of the main theory; 2. Findings regarding processes and strategies utilized by families; 3. Findings related to strains in the transnational contexts in which families live and in which their relationships are developed and maintained; and 4. Findings related to separation experiences and prolonged separation.

In Chapter 4, the final chapter, I present the discussion and conclusions of this dissertation, summarizing main findings and highlighting questions that developed from this study that should be investigated in future research. I also discuss what I labeled as the positive consequences of living in transnational and mixed-status families for the K’iche participants in this dissertation to ensure that readers do not step away with only an understanding of challenges experienced by these particular families. I close this section by discussing how this research contributes to a variety of disciplines and research areas within the social sciences and to policy implications for comprehensive immigration reform. The tables, drawings, and diagrams referred to in this study are provided throughout this dissertation or in the appendices.

II. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I describe the framework I followed throughout this dissertation, which draws from transnational, socio-legal, and family systems theory. This framework served as an essential guide throughout the dissertation, as it informed the iterative development of research questions, the design of the research, as well as the analysis of findings. To begin describing this framework, I define transnational theory and describe its application in migration research with families. I then describe how transnational
theory is an integral aspect of this dissertation and how it informed my decision to conduct this research with families who are spread out between the U.S. and Guatemala.

I then discuss the critical socio-legal approach that framed the language and content of the dissertation, as well as the questions I explored throughout this research. As I describe below, a socio-legal approach considers law and legal systems in relation to broader social and political contexts and theories. A critical socio-legal approach views uncritical research with undocumented noncitizens as problematic and argues that “illegality” is an identification imposed on individual lives and realities that is both produced and sustained by social relationships (Bibler Coutin, 2000; De Genova, 2002).

In addition to socio-legal theories and transnational theories, I drew from family systems theory described below, to guide the process of selecting participants as well as explorations of participants’ daily lives and family relationships. Family systems theory proposes viewing families as systems unto themselves, with many interrelated parts. This view of families is particularly helpful when conducting research that explores interactions occurring within complex families and for generating understandings of relationships between two or more family members in a particular family. This approach also guided explorations of how transnational, mixed-status families may or may not function as a whole (Minuchin, 1985).

**Transnational theory.** The phenomenon of transnationalism has been defined and utilized across the social sciences to analyze processes and entities that link the global and the local (Andrade-Eekhoff & Silva-Avalos, 2003; Portes, 2001). Some transnational theorists posit that there are two types of transnationalism: transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). In this conception,
governments and corporations are theorized as participating in transnationalism from above, while migrants and small business owners are involved in transnationalism from below (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Transnational scholar Alejandro Portes identifies transnational theory as a useful tool for analyzing multiple actors, activities, and relationships involved in linking the global and the local, but suggests that differences exist in the types of actors, activities, and relationships explored in transnational scholarship. He suggests that transnational scholars identify these distinctions in terms of international forces, such as states and institutions that engage in activities in multiple countries despite their base in one particular nation; multinational actors, such as the Catholic Church whose interests transcend the limiting borders of nation states; and transnational actors who include informal or non-insitutional entities or people who engage in activities between borders (Andrade-Eekhoff & Silva-Avalos, 2003; Portes, 2001).

**Transnational theory in research with families.** While there are a variety of definitions for transnational actors and processes, migration scholars tend to agree that applying a transnational framework to research with families enables researchers to explore the ties migrants maintain to their territories of origin, as well as the social networks that enable initial migration processes (Andrade-Eekhoff & Silva-Avalos, 2003; Levitt, 2011; Vertovec, 2003). Moreover, since the 1990s, scholars in sociology and anthropology interested in family relationships have relied on transnational theory to explore how migrants maintain cross-border relationships and identities that are anchored in multiple countries (Levitt, 2011; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). Throughout the last decade, psychologists have also shifted the lens through which they view migration
processes from that of acculturation and assimilation theories to transnational theory (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Brabeck et al., 2011; Suárez-Orzoco, Bang, & Kim, 2010).

Transnational theory is now embraced by sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists among other social scientists and viewed as a useful approach to research with individuals and families in the era of globalization (Falicov, 2007; Levitt, 2001; Levitt & Jarowsky, 2007). Transnational scholars argue that with this theory we can understand how transnational actors maintain multiple and complex ties to their countries of origin while adapting to and integrating into their receiving countries, or in other terms, how contemporary migrants live “across and between borders” (Levitt, 2001). This theory also suggests that migrants and their children in the U.S., for example, are often (but not always) participating in familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that extend broders or occur in both the U.S. and in origin societies (Levitt & Jarworsky, 2007). Through their participation in these processes migrants are understood to actively construct and reconstitute their lives as “simultaneously embedded in more than one society” (Caglar, 2001, p. 607). It is this definition of transnational theory that directed this dissertation research.

This dissertation was specifically informed by transnational scholarship across the social sciences that documented some of the ways in which migrants and their family members participate in each other’s lives, despite being spread out across multiple societies. Much of this research has found that families and communities who live across two or more nations utilize particular behaviors and processes to develop and maintain connections across borders (Levitt, 2001; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Some of this work
has evidenced that members of transnational families and communities rely heavily on cross-border communication and remittance exchanges between host and origin countries to maintain ties (see, among others, Artico, 2003; Horton, 2009; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Menjívar, 2012; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).

Transnational research with families has frequently focused on the roles of remittances in transnational relationships. Some of this work has found that the process of migrants sending remittances across borders is engaged because the livelihood, health, and happiness of family members who remain in origin countries is dependent on these remittances and the ability of migrant relatives to continuously send them (Brabeck et al., 2011; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2005). This research has also found that remittances and cross-border communication are transnational processes that affect family members who remain in home countries as much as, if not more than, those who have migrated (McKenzie & Menjívar, 2011; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2008). This research notes that relatives in origin countries often engage in transnational processes, such as cross-border communication, at the same rate as their migrant relatives abroad (McKenzie & Menjívar, 2011; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2008).

Because family experiences are at the center of transnational experiences, transnational scholars have come to define transnationalism, and the act of migration in the 21st century, as a “family project” (Schmalzbauer, 2004). Specifically, migrants are motivated to and invest in migrating north initially because of a combination of health, education, and/or monetary needs of the family members who remain in origin countries (Schmalzbauer, 2004). Research has shown that even after being in the U.S. for several
years, migrants frequently continue to engage in cross-border economic activities with relatives in origin countries (Schmalzbauer, 2004).

Research with Central American family members who migrated to the U.S. while the majority of their family members remained in Central America, for example, found that these migrant relatives chose to migrate and separate from their family to be able to find work and earn a living wage in order to support their family members back home (Andrade-Eekhof & Silva-Avalos, 2003). Research with transnational families from the global south has increased over the last decade, but this work continues to focus on migrants’ and their families’ socioeconomic motivations for migrating (Castañeda, 2012; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2005; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). Some transnational scholars note, however, that this research extends and complements earlier social science research in migration studies documenting that migrants, and Central Americans migrants in particular, made the journey to the U.S. to seek refuge and political asylum because they were fleeing war and state-sponsored violence in origin nations (e.g., Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991; Hiller, Linstroth, & Ayala Vela, 2009). Recent research has also shown that these experiences of war and violence are antecedents to and consequences of the ongoing conditions of poverty and unemployment in countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador, which are impelling current migrations to the U.S., and the transnationalizing of families (Brabeck et al., 2011; Davis, 2007).

Transnational scholarship has found that regardless of migrants’ reasons for choosing to transnationalize their families initially, remittances from migrants in host societies are collectively keeping the economies of impoverished countries afloat, such as those of Guatemala and El Salvador (Agunias, 2006; Andrade-Eekhoff & Silva-Avalos,
Lead transnational scholar Peggy Levitt (2001; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007) is cautious about the focus on economic activities, and the consequences thereof, in transnational scholarship across disciplines. She argues that while investigating economic aspects of migration and transnationalism is indeed important, economic exchanges across borders is only one of many “interactions” within transnational families that play an important role in transnational life (2001; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

In addition to remittances and other socioeconomic exchanges, transnational families have been found to engage in cross-border cultural and social exchanges, which influence daily life in origin and host societies (Levitt, 2001; Ozden & Schiff, 2007; Portes, 1999; Somerville, 2008). Studies have found, for example, that transnational family members in origin countries, especially youth, often adopt the prevalent cultural values in host countries where their relatives have settled (Levitt, 2001). This occurs as youth receive commodities in the mail from migrant relatives, and as they learn about life in host countries from the media or other cross-border communication networks (Levitt, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2005). Research has also shown that migrants’ day-to-day interactions with U.S. institutions, such as schools and banks, influence their families and communities in countries of origin. Recent research with transnational Mayan communities who are spread across the U.S. and Guatemala demonstrated that knowledge and stories about migrants’ lives in the U.S., including gossip about migrants’ experiences in the U.S., is transmitted through personal cross-border communication networks with significant consequences for origin communities (Brabeck et al., 2011; Foxen, 2007). Recently, transnational research has found that concern and worry
experienced by migrants who encounter detention and deportation systems have particularly salient influences on family members in origin countries (Brabeck et al., 2011; Menjívar, 2012; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).

**Socio-legal approach.** While transnational approaches guide research explaining how transnational, mixed-status families “interact and carry out their family lives across national borders,” to understand how the U.S. sociopolitical climate affects these families’ daily lives, interactions, and psychosocial wellbeing, research with them must also draw from socio-legal theories (Bibler Coutin, 2011; De Genova, 2002; Horton, 2009; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012, p. 348). Socio-legal theories suggest that states of “legality” or “illegality” are constructions often applied to members of migrant populations in host societies that are produced by political forces and social interactions in these societies (Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2007). They note that despite their constructed nature, these states wield influence on migrants’ day-to-day experiences in host countries (Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2007).

Socio-legal theorists argue that research with undocumented migrants in particular must identify the forces that produce and sustain undocumented migrations from origin countries to host countries as well as the forces influencing constructions of legality or illegality (Sassen, 1998; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012, p. 348). They, for example, argue that if researchers complicitly and/or uncritically categorize migrants in the U.S. or other nations who are present without legal documentation as “illegal aliens,” than their research is perpetrating an “egregious kind of epistemic violence” on their lives and those of their families (De Genova, 2002).
Because this dissertation is informed by transnational and socio-legal theoretical approaches, it describes why undocumented transnational migrations have proliferated for the Maya K’iche’ from Guatemala, the particular ethno-linguistic group to which every participant in this study belongs. It also takes a critical stance towards the political, social, and other forces that create “alienation” for the families in this study, the process through which they are defined and treated as illegal aliens in the U.S. (Bibler Coutin, 2000, De Genova 2002). This study also describes and addresses the systems and legislative changes (or stagnations) that have led to the categorization of families as mixed-status, and what these complicated and unequal legal realities mean for different members of each participant family, whether in the U.S. or in Guatemala. With this critical approach it also asks if in the 21st century, “illegality” is more detrimental and disruptive of migrants’ and their transnational families’ daily activities than in past decades, as many more local forces and actors, including states, city governments, local law enforcement and even schools are currently involved in penalizing migrants for their “illegal” presences in the U.S (Bibler Coutin, 2011; Morse et al., 2012).

**Family systems theory.** While socio-legal and transnational theories informed this dissertation’s exploration of legal systems, socioeconomic conditions, and other important macro- and family-level forces related to the undocumented migration and separation experiences of participant families, this dissertation drew from family systems theory to hone in on interactions, processes, and relationships within the families. Minuchin’s (1985) work on family systems theory, arguing that developmental psychologists need to incorporate more complex and dynamic understandings of family systems and processes into their research with children and families, influenced much of
this study. Minuchin (1985) suggested that because psychological research with families has a history of only including isolated data from one family member, research in psychology should prioritize exploring various subsystems within the family, such as the caregiver, parent-child, and sibling subsystems, among others, that influence and are influenced by the developing child.

Minuchin’s call in the 1980s for research in psychology to explore multiple family relationships continues to be relevant today. There is, for example, a significant body of family research on mothering in low-income families, but fathers are often absent from this work (e.g., Ackerman, Brown, D’Eramo, & Izard, 2002). Similarly, transnational scholarship with families often includes interviews and other forms of qualitative or quantitative data from mothers in families, yet rarely are male migrants present in the studies (Parreñas, 2005; Lamb, 2010). In transnational research there also is a dearth of studies that are “truly transnational,” that is, conducted within the two nations in which family members are based (Amelina, 2010; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). Thus, the voices of children left behind and caregivers based in migrants’ origin nations, who can include grandparents, older siblings, aunts, among others, are often lacking from the literature (Aranda, 2003; Orellana, Thorne, Chee & Lam, 2001; Pottinger, 2005).

To incorporate various subsystems in the exploration of transnational family processes, this study included parents, elected alternative caregivers, and children within nine transnational families living between the U.S. and Guatemala. I specifically chose to interview a focal-child and primary or alternative caregiver in Guatemala, and an undocumented migrant parent in the U.S. in each participant family, because extant research with transnational families in Central and South America, the Caribbean and
China has shown that these family members are actively involved in transnational family relationships (e.g., Artico, 2003; Dreby, 2010; Hagan 1994; Hondageneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Pottinger, 2005; Yoshikawa, 2011). While I had intended to include U.S.-based siblings in this research to explore transnational sibling relationships (and sub-systems) directly, age limitations prevented U.S.-based siblings and children from participating in this work in the same way as children and siblings based in Guatemala.

Despite only including children based in Guatemala in the direct data collection, (as is described below), this dissertation did respond to the call from family systems research for more work on various subsystems within families. Transnational parent-child, transnational parent-alternative caregiver, as well as alternative caregiver-child relationships were explored in this work. Additionally, sibling relationships were explored through interviews with various family members, and through interviews with siblings in Guatemala who were older than eight and interested in participating. Relationships between spouses who are separated across borders were also explored to a limited extent.

In addition to the aim of exploring multiple sub-systems within families, there are several tenets of family systems research that complement transnational theory and research in the context of families participating in this study. Family systems research has continually argued that family members are more appropriately viewed as interrelated parts of a family unit than as individual entities acting in isolation. The specific property of wholeness states that family members combine to form a family unit that is more than the sum of the individual people who are its parts. This tenet complements research with transnational families, which argues that migration and “transnationalization” are actions
undertaken by family members for the sake of the whole family (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2005). This *wholeness* property states further that any change in one family member influences the entire family unit (Becvar & Becvar, 2006)). When applied to transnational families, the migration of one relative to the U.S. can be understood as influenced by and influencing the behaviors and experiences of other family members, as is suggested in transnational research (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Additionally, as argued in transnational scholarship, one migrant relative’s experiences in the U.S., whether in employment or legal contexts, should be expected to influence other members of the family, whether they are based in the U.S. or origin nations (Brabeck et al., 2011; Levitt, 2001). This idea is also supported by the family systems property of *interconnectedness*, which emphasizes that family members do not act in isolation, but instead affect one another in mutual patterns (Becvar & Becvar, 2006).

III. Literature Review

In the following review of the literature, I summarize additional research that contributed to the integrated framework guiding this dissertation. The scholarship summarized below explores the topics of, 1. Research with transnational and mixed-status families and youth, 2. Family systems research with migrant families, 3. Research with the Maya from Guatemala; and, 4. Research on contexts of “illegality” in the U.S. The last two sections contextualize this study with transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families living across the U.S. and Guatemala as they summarize the limited research with Mayan populations in the U.S. and Guatemala, describe the socio-historical factors contributing to the undocumented migration of the Maya to the U.S., and explain
the current sociopolitical climate in the U.S. in which Mayan migrants are living.

**Research with transnational and mixed-status families and youth.** This sub-section reviews the research with transnational and/or mixed-status families and youth that contributed to the development of this dissertation. I focus in particular on *transnational parent-child relationships* as much of the research with transnational families explores the relationships migrant parents in host societies strive to maintain with children who remain in origin countries, and the exploration of families’ lives in this study included closely attending to transnational parent-child relationships within each participant family. Because of the increases over the last decade in the number of migrants who experience detention and deportation in or from the U.S. and internationally (Nessel, 2008), some of the research with transnational families has begun focusing on *constraints to transnational parent-child relationships* for transnational families, which include undocumented migrant relatives in the U.S. This research has identified some of the constraints as specifically related to detention, deportation, and other elements in the contexts of “illegality” in which undocumented migrants live. This research is reviewed here as well because it informed this study’s investigation of whether and how participant families’ separation experiences were related to immigration and deportation systems. This section closes with a review of *research with youth in transnational and/or migrant families* conducted by transnational scholars, psychologists, and education researchers. Here some of the research exploring youths’ transnational attachments and identities, as well as research in psychology on migrant youth development are summarized as both areas influenced the analysis of findings in this dissertation.
Transnational parent-child relationships. The transnational theory described above has developed over the last several decades through an increase in “multisited” research with members of migrant families in the U.S. and the greater northern hemisphere, and their relatives in origin countries (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2005; Sladokva, 2007). This research generally focuses on transnational relationships between migrant parents and children left behind in origin countries (Parreñas, 2005; Pottinger, 2005; Schmalzbauer, 2005). There is some rich data available on these transnational parent-child relationships including in the notable Divided by Borders (Dreby, 2010), Children of Global Migration (Parreñas, 2005), and the above-cited work by Levitt (2001) and Schmalzbauer (2004, 2005). This research, and the leading transnational work by Hodagneu-Sotelo (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2001, 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), has provided a window into the experiences of transnational families who live between the global south and the United States. From this scholarship it has become clear that when parents from the global south migrate, they leave children in origin countries and elect most often female caregivers such as grandmothers, sisters, aunts, daughters, neighbors or friends to care for them in their absence. Transnational scholars refer to these elected caregivers as “other mothers” (Schmalzbauer, 2004), “alternative caregivers” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), or “middlewomen” (Dreby, 2010).

Research has shown that these alternative caregivers have a significant impact on children’s development even though the children they are caring for are not their biological children (Artico, 2003). These caregivers also influence how these children will perceive their biological parents and other adults in the future (Artico, 2003; Dreby,
Additionally, these (frequently female) caregivers take on the role of being in charge of the finances and day-to-day responsibilities as they apply to the children in their care (Carter, 2004; Dreby, 2010). This research has also shown that when biological parents continuously send remittances to their children in countries of origin, their children are likely to maintain some form of an attachment to their parents over time (Artico, 2003; Pottinger, 2005). Some scholars suggest that remittances undergird the transnational parent-child bond, such that they become “the currency of transnational love; [the] ...only means through which parental presence can cross international boundaries” (Horton, 2009, p. 38). While the research with transnational families and elected caregivers informed this dissertation, it is important to note that this dissertation differed from much previous work in this area as elected caregivers within participant families also included males such as brothers and grandfathers. This issue is discussed further in the methods chapter.

**Constraints to parent-child relationships and contexts of illegality.**

Transnational scholarship in the 21st century has also investigated how these negotiated relationships between migrant parents, their children, and the alternative caregivers in origin countries are further complicated by the multiple legal barriers migrant parents face while living in the United States (Horton, 2009; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). This work offers a more comprehensive picture of transnational parent-child relationships but continues to emphasize the primary role remittances play in the maintenance of transnational family relationships across borders. For example, remittances are frequently mentioned in recent research with undocumented migrants whose children and other relatives remain in origin countries (Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). This work showed that
even after parental migrants spend several years living and working in the U.S., their inability to adjust their status also limits their income, and thus, lessens the amount of and frequency at which they can send remittances to relatives in origin countries (Menjívar, 2006). The obstacles undocumented parental migrants experience to earning and sending remittances to children and alternative caregivers in origin countries strains the relationships they strive to maintain with their children from afar (Menjívar, 2006; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009).

Despite these strains related to migrants’ undocumented statuses, research with transnational, mixed-status families has shown that relatives in migrants’ origin countries are sometimes able to understand that family in the U.S. are working abroad and sacrificing for their benefit (Brabeck et al., 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). Specifically, researchers have found that some Central American youth, who were left behind when parents migrated to the U.S., often relay an understanding that their lives have improved materially because of their parents’ migrations to the U.S. (Brabeck et al., 2011; Horton, 2009; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009).

Even though relationships between migrant parents in the U.S. and children in origin countries are frequently investigated in research with transnational families, they represent only one type of transnational family configuration and separation experience. In addition to these more typical transnational families, there are a growing numbers of transnational, mixed-status families that are constituted by an undocumented migrant parent who has been deported from the U.S., and his or her U.S. citizen child and spouse who remain in the U.S. (Hagan et al., 2008). Recent research has also shown that transnational family configurations can include a migrant parent with children in the U.S.
who are citizens, and children in origin countries whom the parent has not seen for an extended period of time (Brabeck et al., 2011). All families in this study, for example, include a child in Guatemala and five of them include both children in Guatemala and in the U.S.

Research by Hagan and colleagues (2008) has explored some of the recently identified complex and multiple family structures to which Salvadoran deportees from the U.S. belong. In their study, Hagan et al. (2008) interviewed over 300 Salvadoran deportees and found that while all deportees were reunited with relatives in El Salvador once deported from the U.S., among their sample, three structures of distinctive transnational families emerged. These included deportees who still had parents, aunts, and uncles in the U.S., deportees with siblings and cousins in the U.S., and deportees with a spouse and child in the U.S. Hagan and colleagues’ work (2008) has shown that of the over nine million individuals who have been removed from the U.S. since 2000 (Kanstroom & Rosenbloom, 2009), are many who leave behind spouses and U.S. citizen children. A recent report by ICE confirms that between January and June of 2011, approximately 50,000 migrants were deported from the U.S. who had U.S. citizen children (see, Wessler, 2011a).

This research has demonstrated that transnational family configurations are complex, varied, and constantly changing in response to globalization and international policies. This work, as well as other recent scholarship with transnational, mixed-status families has contributed to theory development about transnational family relationships and how they are affected by U.S. deportation policies and practices and the contexts of “illegality” in which migrants in the U.S. and their family members live (see, Hagan et
al., 2008; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009). For example, Menjívar and Abrego’s work (2009) includes interviews with undocumented children in the U.S. in which they convey mixed feelings towards siblings in their families who have U.S. citizenship. In this work, one young interviewee expressed jealousy about a sibling’s ability to receive consistent medical care and not simply emergency health care, which was all he could rely on due to his lack of citizenship (p. 178). Another young woman, however, expressed gratitude toward her U.S.-citizen sisters’ statuses, as their statuses as citizens allowed the family to receive public housing benefits that they would not have received otherwise (p. 179). This research reveals how children within the same family can conceive of family in different ways and possess different feelings toward relatives related to their varying citizenship statuses. Similarly, Jennifer Dreby’s (2010) longitudinal research with transnational Mexican families suggests that the forces of globalization and migration and deportation that influence the transnationalizing of the family, and hence, family separation experiences, can result in inequitable responsibilities and privileges for members of the same family that result in increased family conflict.

While Dreby’s work provides comprehensive information on multiple relationships within families that stretch across national borders and the multiple perspectives of family members engaged in these relationships, such work is rare. To develop theory about families that are both transnational and mixed-status in the 21st century, more research is needed that is conducted in the multiple geographic locations where family members are based, considers the perspectives of multiple members of families, and attends to the multiple structural forces influencing within-family experiences. There has also been little to no work with Mayan migrant families who are
spread out across two different nations and part of the significant undocumented migrant population in the U.S. (McKanders, 2010). Moreover, how youth fair psychologically and socio-emotionally in these complex families, and what they contribute to their families, is a question rarely asked by transnational researchers or psychologists who work with migrant families (some exceptions include Dreby, 2010; Falicov, 2007; Hess & Shandy, 2008; Orellana et al., 2001).

**Research with youth in transnational and/or migrant families.** An area of inquiry within transnational scholarship that has attended to youths’ experiences in their families and social networks explores transnational attachments for migrant youth, and youth whose parents are migrants. This work has largely been conducted in the U.S. (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), Canada (e.g., Sommerville, 2008), and throughout Europe (e.g., Ehrkamp, 2005). Sociologists such as Portes and Rumbaut (2001), Cecilia Menjívar (2002, 2006), and Kara Somerville (2008), for example, have taken up the question of whether 1.5 generation migrant youth—those who arrive at a young age to their host societies—and/or 2nd generation migrant youth—who were born in host societies to migrant parents—develop or maintain bonds to their or their parents’ countries of origin. These scholars chose to investigate transnational attachments because elements of transnational networks, such as family relationships and cultural heritage, have been found to significantly influence migrant youth development, particularly for Latino youth in the U.S. (Cabrera, Villarruel, & Fitzgerald, 2011).

From their comprehensive research with an ethnically diverse sample of 2nd generation migrant youth in the U.S., Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found that the 2nd generation develops loose attachments to their transnational networks and parents’ origin
countries, if they attach at all. Menjívar’s (2002) research with Guatemalan youth yielded similar results. However, Menjívar, unlike Portes and Rumbaut, paid close attention to the historical and sociopolitical factors that could influence the development of transnational attachments in Guatemalan youth. She found that citizenship status and the history of civil war in one’s nation of origin could influence the feelings and connections maintained to it. Menjívar (2002) also points out that parents’ undocumented statuses can prevent migrant youth, i.e. 2nd generation youth living in the U.S., from visiting their origin countries, which could lessen their attachments to “home” over time. This work suggests that transnational connections and behaviors appear differently in U.S.-based transnational families that are of mixed-status, compared to those comprised of only U.S. citizens.

While Somerville (2008) investigated similar questions in her research with Indo-Canadian youth and their parents, who were Canadian citizens, her study’s findings challenged research by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). Somerville found that Indo-Canadian youth (living in Canada, with parents originating from India) were deeply connected to their parents’ country of origin, and that this connection had informed their identity development in many ways. For example, youth in Somerville’s research expressed deep emotional connections to two nations simultaneously and had culturally conformed to some of the dress and other practices of their parents’ country of origin. Somerville (2008) positioned her research as a response to Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) claims that transnationalism is a “one generation phenomenon.”

Migrant youth development. The studies summarized above are part of the transnational scholarship that tries to answer the question of whether youth are “truly
transnational,” and grow up with simultaneous, multi-national connections in the 21st
century (Orellana et al., 2001). In contrast to research on transnational attachments and
identities, psychologists who do research with migrant youth have demonstrated their
primary concern for exploring migrant youths’ psychosocial adjustment to host countries
and/or educational experiences (e.g., Frabutt 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin
2009). Within this scholarship, gender differences in U.S.-based migrant youth outcomes
in different developmental contexts have also been explored. This work has demonstrated
that boys in migrant families in the U.S. perform worse in school, have more freedom in
home and community contexts, and more delinquency or problem behaviors than girls
(Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006). In contrast, girls have been shown to excel academically
while also taking on greater responsibilities in the home, such as cooking, cleaning, and
maintaining younger siblings, while parents in the U.S. are at work (Suárez-Orozco &
Qin, 2006). While this work has shed much light on developmental outcomes of migrant
boys and girls and the children of migrant parents in the U.S., it neglects to locate
migrant youths in their transnational family configurations (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010)
or in the sociopolitical contexts of immigration and deportation systems (Brabeck et al.,
2011). This work, thus, suffers from presenting a partial description and understanding of
family contexts and experiences for migrant youth in the U.S. in the 21st century.

Some researchers and practitioners in the education sector have very recently
begun to identify migrant youth in schools as part of transnational networks (see, Cho,
Chen, & Shin, 2010). This research has the goal of increasing the knowledge and
understanding teachers and other educators possess about members of their student
populations. This work seeks to understand whether youth in U.S. schools are involved in
transnational family relationships that could impact learning experiences in and outside the home (Cho et al., 2010; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011). Furthermore, because it is well documented that schools cannot educate or serve children without taking their family makeups into consideration, some education researchers have prioritized studying transnational families and finding ways to enable family involvement for these families, even if they are spread out across two nations (see Cho et al., 2010).

While much has been learned about migrant and transnational youth from research in transnational studies, psychology, and education, many questions still remain about the development of transnational youth in the 21st century. As the number of mixed-status and transnational families between the U.S. and Central America is increasing, more must be done to explore the developmental consequences of such complex family structures for the children growing up in them, and how such families collectively respond to sociopolitical and family-level challenges.

**Family systems research with migrant families.** As argued above, family systems theory can be a useful framework for understanding child development and relationships in 21st century transnational families. Unfortunately, research that specifically applies family systems theory to studies of transnational family life and intra-familial experiences with multiple members of transnational families in multiple societies is scarce. Family therapists, however, have applied aspects of family systems theory to scholarship about and therapy with migrant families in the U.S., and Latino families in particular, over the last decade. Some social scientists have also applied elements of family systems theory to the study of adaptation processes for migrant families in the U.S in the 21st century. This section reviews several studies conducted by family therapists
and psychologists that draw from family systems theory to enhance their research with and/or the therapy they provide to migrant families in the U.S. The research reviewed here informed the analysis of findings in this dissertation as well as some of the major discussion points in this dissertation.

**Family systems and family therapy.** Celia Falicov (2007) authored a very influential empirical paper published in *Family Process,* that drew the attention of psychologists and practitioners who work with migrant families to the presence of transnational connections and relationships in their clients’ lives. While Falicov (2007) does not refer to family systems theory directly in her work with transnational families, she develops what she describes as an “ecosystemic framework” that can allow therapists to attend to migrants’ relationships with various family members in origin and host countries during therapy as well as in research.

According to Falicov (2007), therapists who work with migrants should understand that their migrant processes have psychosocial effects on them and their relatives “in any location at any time” (p.158). Falicov (2007) also argues that psychologists and researchers should pay attention to the multiple and complex interactions among members of transnational families as well as their ecological contexts, and, if possible, develop transnational collaborations to help clients. In addition to recommendations for family therapists, Falicov (2007) encourages social scientists to theorize about definitions of family life, “how relationships evolve at long distance,” and about interventions that could be developed to meet the needs of transnational family members who experience separation and reunification (p. 169). Falicov’s work urges
research to be conducted that applies systems thinking to the challenges experienced by transnational families in the 21st century.

Recent research by Bacigalupe and Lambe (2011) has also focused on interactions and changes occurring within transnational families. These authors discuss how, with the advances in technology in response to globalization, transnational families who are separated across borders experience changes together, such as changes to their identities and in ways of relating across geographic distances. The authors explain that this is because in the 21st century international communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly available to and accessed by migrants and their relatives in origin countries, including those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. They argue that ICTs are accessed so frequently that they have transformed families into transnational entities that engage in relational processes and uninterrupted social ties across borders. These authors say scholars or therapists who want to examine relationships and interactions within transnational families must incorporate the communication tools that allow families to adjust to globalization (p.16) and maintain a sense of “familyhood” (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2003) across national borders.

Bacigalupe and Lambe (2011) explain that through communication technologies transnational family members are able to take part in each others’ lives and more easily interact with multiple players in their complex and large transnational families. The authors note that because family therapy views acknowledging family members and aspects of a client’s ecological system as essential to the therapy and healing process, therapists must also utilize ICTs such as Skype to include multiple members from a transnational migrant’s family and/or ecological system (i.e. siblings and teachers in
origin countries) in therapy sessions. This process will allow for these players who are vital to a client’s life experiences to participate in the collective therapeutic and problem-solving process that is at the heart of family therapy (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011).

**Family systems and research with migrants.** Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) also provide valuable theorizing and scholarship regarding how complicated family-level experiences, interactions, and changes can be attended to when trying to meet the needs of migrant families in the 21st century. While Falicov (2007) and Bacigalupe and Lambe (2011) suggested how family systems and ecosystems models can be incorporated in therapy with transnational migrant families, Bacallao and Smokowski apply family systems theory to research with migrant families in the U.S. who experience precarious legal statuses. These researchers did not explicitly focus on transnational interactions, but they did explore dynamics in undocumented families based in the U.S., and specifically the post-migration changes experienced by the undocumented parents and adolescents in their study.

In their research, the authors specifically apply family systems theory and grounded theory techniques to the development and analysis of interviews with parents and adolescents in 10 undocumented Mexican families. The authors were interested in exploring the changes family members experienced after migration, how these changes affected family members and their interactions with one another, and the factors that explain adjustment post-migration. Through grounded theory analysis, the authors identified the main storyline underlying the families’ post-migration experiences and systems change, which they describe as “the costs of getting ahead and how undocumented Mexican families coped with these costs” (p. 54). They specifically found
that parents and adolescents describe the migration experience in terms of families’
choosing to relocate to the U.S. for work opportunities and to move their children ahead
by getting them U.S. educations.

Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) identified some of the costs of getting ahead,
drawing from a family systems perspective, in terms of relationships being strained in the
process of migration, and family roles needing to be redefined because of separation
experiences that occur as part of the migration process. The authors specifically report
that as parents, and mothers especially, take on work in the U.S., they have less time to
spend with their children. For their children, who were all adolescents who had migrated
to join their parents, experiencing their parents’ long work hours in addition to the loss of
relatives in Mexico left them feeling lonely and mournful. The authors reported that
families coped with such stressors by relying on cultural values. Adolescents also coped
by thinking a lot about the past, while parents coped by thinking about their children’s
futures.

Without labeling interactions or experiences of the undocumented family
members in their studies as “transnational,” Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) clearly
found that the families in their study were experiencing challenges related to
sociopolitical contexts as well as emotional strains related to the transnational and
migration processes in which they were involved.

From the studies reviewed here, it is clear that family systems theory or aspects of
this theory complement research with transnational and mixed-status families. This
theory enables practitioners and scholars to carefully attend to the multiple interactions in
which migrants and their family members engage, whether with multiple family members
in local or distant geographical contexts, or with legal institutions or systems. Family systems theories also allow scholars to focus on the tools (i.e., the telephone and the internet) that families utilize to reorganize their relationships and adjust to host societies and the transnational configurations of their families in the 21st century.

**Research with the Maya from Guatemala.** The above sub-sections have demonstrated how transnational, socio-legal, and family systems theories can be integrated to explore relationships within transnational, mixed-status families. While some of the above research has included scholarship with Central American migrants, who include Mayan migrants from Guatemala (i.e., Brabeck et al., 2011; Capps et al., 2007; Menjívar, 2002), this section offers a more comprehensive review of research across the social sciences with Mayan families and communities, as well as research about the socio-historical context in Guatemala from which Mayan migrants to the U.S. came.

This section begins by presenting some of the demographic information about Guatemala, and particularly, about characteristics of the Maya of Guatemala, to set the stage for the research described below. Here some of the scholarship with Mayan women and children is also reviewed. Next some of the socio-historical research about Guatemala is reviewed in some detail, as well as information about exploitation, armed conflict, and internal and external migration experiences of the Maya, to further contextualize this dissertation and the migration and transnational experiences of participant Maya K’iche’ transnational, mixed-status families that are presented in the findings of this dissertation.
Characteristics of the Maya. The indigenous Mayan population in Guatemala is comprised of twenty-three linguistic groups, yet Mayans are currently the minority population within Guatemala (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Guatemala’s general population is approximately 60% ladino—of mixed European and Mayan ancestry—and 40% Mayan (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011). Of the Mayan population, the K´iche´ Maya are the largest group and a significant percentage of them are believed to reside in the U.S. as part of transnational families and communities (Foxen, 2007; Hagan, 1994; Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010).

The K´iche´ Maya are primarily from the region of El Quiché, Guatemala. El Quiché is one of Guatemala’s 22 departments and almost 100% of its residents are Maya, in contrast to other areas that are dominated by a higher percentage of ladino residents (Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011). Even though the K´iche´ are only one of the ethno-linguistic groups within the Mayan population in Guatemala, this group is heterogeneous. Some K´iche´, and the researchers that have written about them, claim that they are distinct from other Mayan groups based on cultural traditions and language, whereas other K´iche´ define themselves as unique because of their language identity but discuss sharing cultural characteristics with “the great Maya family” (Hiller et al., 2009; McBride & McBride, 1942, p. 254). Mayan migrants in the U.S. have similarly communicated that they identify themselves as ethnically Maya even though many speak one of the 22 indigenous languages (Hiller et al., 2009). They have explained that they wear Mayan clothes, participate in traditional weaving, and embrace indigenous forms of spirituality shared across Mayan groups (Hiller et al., 2009). These aspects of Mayan life have been found to be important to understanding socio-cultural aspects of Mayan communities in...
Socio-cultural characteristics of the Maya are also important to understand when communicating with Maya. Research with children has found, for example, that Mayan children have more constraints on their expressions of emotions, compared to European and American children (Gaskins & Miller, 2009, pp. 5-21).

This dissertation took place between Zacualpa, a municipality in the department of El Quiché, Guatemala, and the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S., where the transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families in this study currently live. I observed that the majority of family members in this study living in Guatemala were all either primarily K’iche’ speakers, or frequently switched between K’iche’ and Spanish, whereas relatives in the U.S. explained that they speak in Spanish more than K’iche’. The language characteristic of this transnational community seemed to influence the data collection process and particularly, the information generated through interviews, the emotions participants expressed, and the stories they told throughout the dissertation process, as I discuss below.

Characteristics of Mayan families. Research with Mayan families in Guatemala and the U.S. suggests that they have important familial characteristics that need to be incorporated in transnational research with this ethno-linguistic group. Some of this research has shown that Mayan families are comprised of a panoply of extended kin that play an important role in their migration processes (Hagan, 1994). These kin networks are often patrilineal and patriarchal, with the male or father in the family holding the most power in decision-making (Hagan, 1994). While some of these characteristics persist despite the increasing number of Mayan families engaged in migration processes in the
21st century, some research suggests that the high rate of migration of Mayan men to the U.S. over the last two decades and the disproportionate number of men killed in Guatemala’s civil war (described below), have resulted in Mayan women in Guatemala shifting their roles from reproductive laborers to heads of households (Carter, 2004; Melville & Lykes, 1992). These power and gendered shifts in Mayan transnational families parallel the gendered changes observed among other migrant families from the global south (see, Schmalzbauer, 2010).

Research also suggests that despite the continued importance of extended networks to Mayan family members who migrate to the U.S., the units of family reproduced in U.S. contexts when both parents in a family migrate often do not include the physical presence of extended kin (Hagan, 1994). For example, a significant number of Mayans from the Totonicapán area in the Western highland region of Guatemala settled in Houston, Texas during the mid to latter part of the 20th century (Hagan, 1994). When these migrants first made their way to Texas, the vast majority were around thirty years of age and had children they chose to leave in Guatemala with their grandparents (Hagan, 1994). These Mayan parents left their children with relatives in the origin country with the plan to send for them, but not their other relatives, after working full time in the U.S. and knowing their children would be well cared for in Guatemala (Hagan, 1994). Recent research with Mayan families from Guatemala who live in and around Boston has identified similar patterns in cross-border kinship networks and caregiving structures (Brabeck et al., 2011). This work has also found that kinship ties and migration processes among contemporary Mayan migrant families to the U.S., as well as other migrant populations from the southern hemisphere, do differ slightly from
those identified in research with Mayan families in Texas in the 1990s (Brabeck et al., 2011; Dreby, 2010; Horton, 2009; Parreñas, 2005). Specifically, Guatemalan migrant parents in Hagan’s 1994 study reported that they would often “send for” the children they left behind, when they had earned enough money through labor to support them in the U.S. (Hagan, 1994). After reunifying, parents would regularly send their children back to Guatemala during summer months so they could maintain bonds to their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins in their origin country even after adapting to life in the United States (Hagan, 1994).

Recent work suggests that in contrast to research with Mayan migrants in past decades, 21st century parents who migrated from the global south—including those from Guatemala, Mexico, and Central America at large—are experiencing separations from their children in origin countries for longer periods of time than in past decades (Brabeck et al., 2011; Dreby & Stutz, 2012). Moreover, these studies report that parents are increasingly insecure about when and if they will be able to send for their children to join them in the U.S. because of the restrictive U.S. immigration and deportation policies that limit parents’ mobility in the U.S. and between the U.S and countries of origin (Brabeck et al., 2011; Dreby & Stutz, 2012; Horton, 2009; Massey et al., 2002; Parreñas, 2005). Additionally, research has shown that undocumented parents now most frequently move from the U.S. back to their countries of origin to reunify with family in the context of deportation, which bans re-entry to the U.S. for years (Kanstroom, 2007).

Despite these increasingly negative consequences of immigration policy in the U.S. on transnational Mayan families, extended kinship networks continue to play a role in migration decisions made by recent migrants to the U.S. In Guatemala, for example,
husbands and wives and their parents as well as other relatives pool monetary resources or take out loans to raise the money needed to migrate or to send one family member to the U.S, with the expectation of receiving remittances later (Loucky & Moors, 2002). Research has shown that this type of familial interdependence is replicated in Mayan communities in the United States, despite the small number of extended relatives who are present in host societies (Loucky & Moors, 2002). In Los Angeles it has been documented that members of the Mayan community who come from similar regions of Guatemala often live together and pool resources to pay rent and bills, even if they are not blood relatives (Loucky & Moors, 2002). Research has also shown that Guatemalan Mayan migrants, similar to other communities from the global south, seek out migrants from their communities when they migrate to the United States so that they do not have to bear the burden of giving up traditional homes, some familial ties, leaving children in Guatemala, and settling in a new land alone (Loucky & Moors, 2002).

Characteristics of Mayan women and children. Recently, legal scholar Karla McKanders (2010) conducted research with a subgroup of Mayan migrants from Guatemala, Mayan Mam workers. This research sought to contribute to the limited research with Mayan migrants in the U.S. McKanders (2010) specifically explored the conditions under which “indigenous women of color” from Guatemala migrate to the U.S. and how these undocumented women workers are treated as Mayan female laborers in the U.S. This research enhances the small body of work exploring how ethnicity, immigration status, gender, and class intersect to influence the lives of indigenous women, men, and families from Guatemala. Similarly, Hershberg and Lykes (accepted with revisions) conducted research with a small sample of Mayan girls involved in
transnational networks in the U.S. and Guatemala to explore how family experiences and
encounters with deportation influenced these girls’ lives, and how the girls made meaning
of these experiences.

Another important area of research with Mayan youth was and is still being
conducted by Barbara Rogoff (e.g., 1993, 2003). Rogoff initially began doing research in
the town of San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala, to understand to what degree socio-cultural
development and learning (as explained by Vygotsky, 1978) varied by culture. From
Rogoff’s research with families and communities in San Pedro, she learned that Mayan
children follow a highly socialized model of learning and development. In contrast to
children born in the U.S., who are often excluded from parent and community-level
meetings or activities, Mayan children learn their major developmental tasks through
participating in and observing family and community members on a day-to-day basis
(Rogoff, 1993). Rogoff’s work makes clear the importance of attending to socio-cultural
aspects of development in psychological research, especially research with ethno-
linguistic groups.

Socio-historical research about Guatemala. Research with migrant populations
in the U.S. also has shown that attending to socio-historical factors in scholarship about
migrant groups is important, as these factors may distinguish the experiences and needs
of different groups of migrants in the U.S. from one another (Brabeck et al., 2011;
experiences of migrant groups may also contribute to understandings of the push factors
that lead populations to migrate, and shed light on questions regarding migrants’ ties to
home countries once they resettle in a new land (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991;
Menjivar, 2002). Additionally, psychologists and transnational scholars have found that individual and family development are dynamic processes, and for migrant populations the processes are deeply influenced by sociopolitical contexts as well as cultural and historical factors (Bhatia & Ram, 2001, 2009).

Socio-historical factors are especially important to consider when conducting research with Mayan families, as the Maya from Guatemala have experienced histories of exploitation, inequality, and persistent violence and poverty, which have been linked to their experiences of migration within Guatemala, as well as to the migration of Maya from Guatemala to the U.S. (Lovell, 1988). Recent research with Mayan migrants in the U.S. also shows that Maya experience exploitation and violence in the U.S., in addition to perpetual fear of immigration authorities that they link to their memories of exploitation and war in Guatemala (Brabeck et al., 2011; Fink, 2003; McKanders, 2010). These historical experiences are reviewed in this sub-section to contextualize the background and environment from which Mayan migrants to the U.S. have come, the environment where many of their family members remain, and the research context where much of the data collection for this study took place.

*Exploitation and internal migration.* The country of Guatemala as a whole has suffered from exploitation, violence, and poverty, but the indigenous Maya in Guatemala undoubtedly experienced the most significant losses from these factors (Davis, 2007). The Maya survived forced internal migrations that resulted from cyclical periods of conquest, beginning in 1524 with the conquest by Spain (Lovell, 1988). Since the sixteenth century, the Maya have continued to resettle and experience displacement at the
hands of local and international forces, and most recently, by the Guatemalan state (Lovell, 1988).

In the mid-sixteenth century the Spaniards implemented a policy of congregación (congregation), wherein thousands of Mayan families were coerced to move from the mountains into settlements, which were often built around churches (Lovell, 1988). This process facilitated the conversion of many Maya to Christianity and allowed the Spaniards to more easily centralize the forces of labor in the western highland region of Guatemala (Lovell, 1988). While the state of Guatemala won independence from Spain in 1821, the Maya of Guatemala neither experienced renewed freedom or increased land ownership at that time (Lovell, 1988). Instead, the new found independence of the state of Guatemala was accompanied by investments from domestic and foreign sources in Guatemala’s main cash crop, coffee, which intensified demands on Mayan labor (Lovell, 1988). In this period of history, Maya were coerced yet again to migrate to the coast to provide labor on coffee plantations or fincas (Lovell, 1988).

While many Maya continue to labor in fincas today, and lose their lands because of the foreign investors who are interested in the rich agricultural resources throughout Guatemala, this practice has been met with opposition. For example, in 1978, when the armed conflict in Guatemala was already underway (described below), it was recorded that a group of Kekchi Maya peacefully demonstrated against the government’s refusal to offer them rights to purchase the land they lived on (Lovell, 1988). They protested because an agreement had been made between the Guatemalan government and transnational companies interested in the nickel and petroleum on their land, and these Kekchi families believed they would soon be displaced again (Lovell, 1988). Instead of
receiving land titles, 100 protestors, including men, women and children, were assassinated by a special unit of the Guatemalan armed forces (Lovell, 1988). The Panzos massacre was one of many at the time that symbolized the Guatemalan government’s refusal to interrupt capitalist initiatives aimed at absorbing the land and labor of the Maya (Lovell, 1988).

Armed conflict. The Panzos massacre was one of hundreds that occurred during Guatemala’s 36-year armed conflict, “la violencia.” Even though the conflict came to a close in 1996 with the signing of the peace accords, violence and inequality continues throughout the country, contributing to Guatemala being ranked as one of the most violent countries in the world, with one of the highest murder rates (Godoy, 2002; Reimann, 2009). It is not surprising that the aftermath of the armed conflict in Guatemala is still felt throughout the country, as it was a deemed a conflict of genocidal proportions by the United Nations, and it has been well documented that the Guatemalan Army systematically relied on tactics of terror, such as forced disappearances, torture, political killings, and all-out massacres to subdue the civilian population, which had been seeking increased rights for the Maya and all impoverished peoples (CEH, 1999; Godoy, 2002, p. 642).

Researchers have also documented that one of the main causes of the Guatemalan civil war was gross inequality and social exclusion, a legacy of the colonial period (Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011; CEH, 1999). When the conflict began in the 1960s, for example, in El Quiché—the department most affected by the civil war that is inhabited almost entirely by Maya—90-97% of households did not have access to water and electricity (Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011). The Guatemalan
government at the time responded to the increase in “peasant, worker, indigenous, and political movements and episodic armed insurgencies” that occurred in response to this poverty and inequality by creating murderous military and paramilitary forces supported by “economic elites in the United States” (Grandin, Levenson, & Oglesby, 2011, p. 5). During the 36 year armed conflict, indigenous communities in the central and western highlands—which were the poorest and most marginalized in the country—experienced the “scorched earth” campaigns, wherein more than 600 rural villages were razed, 100,000 mainly Mayan Guatemalans were murdered, and nearly a million Maya were displaced within and outside of Guatemala (CEH, 1999; Godoy, 2002; Melville & Lykes, 1992; Smith, 2006). Displaced Maya migrated to refugee camps in Mexico, to the U.S. and elsewhere in search of refuge from the war (CEH, 1999; Melville & Lykes, 1992; Smith, 2006).

Poverty. The K´iche’ Maya who survived the war and remain in Guatemala, in addition to other Mayan groups throughout Guatemala, now form part of the 52% of Guatemala’s population living in rural areas, deriving their incomes and sustenance from natural resources and the flow of remittances from transnational family members in the U.S. (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010; World Bank 2008). The continued poverty in Guatemala, afflicting millions of Maya, is inextricably related to Guatemala’s armed conflict, and inequality and poverty experienced before the conflict began (Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011; Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991). Despite forces of globalization and the significant rate of migration between Guatemala and the U.S., most Maya still struggle to meet everyday needs. Research has documented that approximately 2% of the population owns 70% of all productive farmland (Viscidi, 2004). While over
50% of Guatemala’s entire population live below the national poverty line, over 73% of indigenous Maya live below it, with 28% living in extreme poverty (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Further, Guatemala has both the highest fertility rate of any Latin American country and one of the highest infant mortality rates and lowest life expectancies at birth (Gragnolati & Marini, 2003; Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010). These factors have motivated Maya from Guatemala who do not own land or other property to migrate to the U.S. (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010).

Migration of the Maya to the U.S. Economic factors are only one of several motivations behind the continued internal and external migration of the Maya in the 20th and 21st centuries (Brabeck et al., 2011; Foxen, 2007; Hamilton & Chinchilla, 1991). As indicated above, the migration of the Maya from Guatemala to the U.S. began in the 1960s, because of the four-decade-long armed conflict in Guatemala (Chamarbagwala & Morán, 2011). During this period, migrants journeyed north in response to repeated experiences of armed attacks, displacement, and in search of refuge (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991). The rate of migration to the U.S. continued and significantly increased throughout the 1980s, as the brutal conflict peaked, and as Guatemala, and particularly, the Guatemalan regions of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Chimaltenango, Alta and Baja Verapaz suffered the majority of human rights violations (91%) experienced throughout the war (CEH, 1999; Chamarbagwala & Moran, 2011). Migration continued through the 1990s, at which point the sizable population of mainly undocumented migrants became a concern for both Mexico and the United States (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010).

Despite moves by the U.S. government to curtail the undocumented migration of Guatemalans and Maya from Guatemala to the U.S., migratory flows have continued to
intensify since the 1990s (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010). Scholars note that the additional macro-level factors contributing to the increase of migrants from Guatemala include a lack of development strategies, steep unemployment rates, and heightened social violence resulting from drug trafficking and gang activity (Moran-Taylor 2008; Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010.) These are just some of the factors contributing to Guatemala’s standing as one of the most violent countries in the world (Godoy, 2002). A 2010 Human Rights Report (see U.S. Department of State, 2011) conducted by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, found that the human rights abuses occurring in Guatemala include the:

Government's failure to investigate and punish unlawful killings committed by members of the security forces; widespread societal violence, including numerous killings; corruption and substantial inadequacies in the police and judicial sectors; police involvement in serious crimes, including unlawful killings, drug trafficking, and extortion; impunity for criminal activity; harsh and dangerous prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; failure of the judicial system to ensure full and timely investigations and fair trials; failure to protect judicial sector officials, witnesses, and civil society representatives from intimidation; threats and intimidation against, and killings of, journalists and trade unionists; discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against indigenous communities; discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and ineffective enforcement of labor laws and child labor provisions.

*Gender-based violence and discrimination.* These experiences of human rights violations and impunity are legacies of the armed conflict in Guatemala, and experiences of repression and violence predating it (Godoy, 2002; Grandin et al., 2011). Indigenous women in Guatemala are particularly vulnerable to experiences of violence and are subjected to different forms of gender-based violence including sexual assault, domestic violence, and femicide, at alarming rates (Reimann, 2009). While crime and murder have been on the rise in Guatemala over the last decade, the murder rate of women has
increased at twice the rate of men (Reimann, 2009). In 2007, 1,800 claims of domestic violence were reported during the first nine months, but the actual number is believed to be significantly higher as human rights organizations estimate that approximately 90% of women who experience domestic violence do not report it to Guatemalan authorities (Reimann, 2009). Legal scholars suggest that explanations of the pervasiveness of gender violence include elements of the Guatemalan culture that devalue and subordinate women (Reimann, 2009). This is evident when reviewing the “anachronistic criminal laws and gender-based discrimination in the home and workplace” (Reimann, 2009). Persistent gender-based violence in Guatemala is also understood as related to the widespread impunity in Guatemala for gender-based and other crimes that can be traced to the armed conflict (Reimann, 2009).

While assessing all of the causes of gender violence in Guatemala and its effects on the country and the Mayan population is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that many Guatemalan girls and women—including two participants in this study—have fled their homes because of experiences of violence and sought asylum in countries such as the United States (Reimann, 2009).

Thus, migrants from Guatemala have arrived in the U.S. fleeing persecution and violence (Hamilton & Stoltz Chichilla, 1991; Reimann, 2009), as well as to escape discrimination experienced in Guatemala (Brabeck et al., 2011). As described above, Maya in Guatemala have experienced inequality and violence connected to their identities and experiences as indigenous since the Spanish conquest (Ashdown, Gibbons, Hackathorn, & Harvey et al., 2011). When Maya were forced into labor several centuries ago, Guatemala’s inhabitants with Spanish blood were not subjected to such treatment
Persistent ethnic distinctions such as these have led to the continued discrimination and oppression of indigenous persons (Ashdown et al., 2011). Even though the 1996 peace accords were signed with the supposed aims of ending the 36 years of civil war and violence towards the Maya, and to engender equality between the Maya and ladino populations in Guatemala, the Maya still lag behind ladinos in education, health, and capital (Ashdown et al., 2011).

Recent research has shown that experiences of bias and discrimination are also reflected in the attitudes of indigenous persons in Guatemala and in the U.S. (e.g., Ashdown et al., 2011; Chaitin et al., 2009) One study reported that K’iche’ children in Guatemala viewed being K’iche’ Maya as undesirable (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). In this study, when asked what it meant to be K’iche’, 57% of youth participants answered negatively and 18% claimed that they did not like being indigenous (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). When asked: "Why would someone not like being a K’iche’,” youth often responded that when they go to towns dominated by ladinos and then return to their own communities, they are ashamed to be “indígenas” “indigenous” (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

In a study with Mayan migrants in Florida, researchers also found that Mayan migrants reassert their ethnic identities as Maya in the U.S., despite experiences of inequality, discrimination, and genocide in their recent histories in Guatemala, and of discrimination in the U.S. that they experienced when identifying as Spanish speakers and/or as indigenous Maya (Hiller et al., 2009).

The research reviewed in this section evidences that Maya live in the U.S. as “legal” and “illegal” migrants with discrimination, forced migration, displacement and
civil war as persistent and frequently painful dimensions of their histories (Brabeck et al., 2011; Smith, 2006). While these socio-historical events and consequences suggest that Maya K´iche´ families in Guatemala and the U.S. share some of the characteristics of many of the millions of transnational refugees and migrants worldwide (United Nations, 2011), it also is possible that for Mayan migrants the relationships and processes engaged within their transnational, mixed-status families differ from those engaged in other families in important ways, due at least in part to the multiple historical antecedents and current socio-economic challenges that influence their lives.

To set the stage for exploring relationships and processes within Maya K´iche´ families that are mixed-status, the last section of this literature review defines and describes the contexts of “illegality” in which members of these families live. This section draws from research in the discipline of legal studies to explicate the legislative changes enacted by congress and local government bodies over the last several decades and to link them with the ubiquitous “legal” challenges they have created for Maya and other Latino and Central American migrants in the U.S. Here the experiences of mixed-status families also are brought into focus, as much of the literature has explored threats and experiences of detention and deportation for these families that include U.S. citizen children and undocumented migrant parents.

**Research on contexts of illegality in the United States.** The Latino population in the U.S. has grown significantly over the last decade. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2010 that 50.5 million Latinos, both U.S.- and foreign-born, reside in the United States, making up 15% of the U.S. population. This is a sharp increase from 2000, when 35.3 million Latinos were recorded as living in the U.S. and accounted for 13% of
the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Approximately 28% of U.S. foreign-born residents are undocumented migrants (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Among the undocumented, 11% are Central American (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Many of these undocumented migrants cross heavily guarded borders and travel long distances on foot and without sufficient resources, arriving or remaining in the United States without authorization (Dreby, 2010; Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009; Fog Olwig, 2001; Menjivar, 2002; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Moreover, the threats do not end once migrants cross the geographic border. As Kanstroom (2007) has argued, since 1996 the U.S. border has moved inward, with increasing numbers of policies and practices that act as social controls on undocumented persons. These realities are uniquely salient for the nine million people living in the United States as part of mixed-status families (Chaudry et al., 2010; Passel & Cohn, 2009). Best estimates suggest that children born to undocumented migrants make up 6.8% of students in U.S. schools (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Of these children, approximately 73% are U.S. citizens (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008; Passel & Cohn, 2009). While only 6.8% of children in U.S. schools may have a parent who is undocumented, they are part of the 25% of children in schools who are either migrants themselves or children of migrants. This statistic is important, as it has been reported that the threats of detention and deportation affect members of migrant families who are documented and undocumented alike (Brabeck & Xu, 2010).

Research also suggests, however, that undocumented migrants in the U.S and their families are more vulnerable to psychosocial distress than citizens and “legal” migrants because of the daily threats they experience from U.S. deportation policies and practices (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Hershberg & Lykes, accepted with revisions;
Yoshikawa, 2011). Despite their vulnerability to these restrictive and punitive deportation policies, as well as limited paths to citizenship and economic opportunities for undocumented migrants in the U.S. (Kanstroom, 2007), the number of undocumented migrants and mixed-status families living in the U.S. increased significantly over the last several decades, but it has remained constant since 2009 (see, Immigration Policy Center, 2011).

The overall increase in undocumented populations in the U.S. is surprising because of three pieces of U.S. legislation enacted since 1986, which aimed to reduce the presence and participation of undocumented migrants in U.S. institutions and society (Kanstroom, 2007). The first was the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which made undocumented migrants much less likely to receive a living wage from employers in the U.S. (Massey, 2007). Research has shown that, despite low wages, migrants have continued to struggle to work under stressful conditions because of the need to support family back in the country of origin, and out of fear of being fired, or, at worse, deported (Bibler Coutin, 2000; Chavez, 1998; Horton, 2009; Massey, 2007).

Additional pieces of legislation include the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the post-9/11 Homeland Security Act (Kanstroom, 2007). The implementation of these two acts has contributed to the significant increase in deportations over the last decade, with more than over 2.2 million migrants deported from 1997 to 2007 (Falcone, 2009). While the passing of IIRIRA was found to have negative consequences for documented and undocumented migrants, it has had particularly negative implications for mixed-status families (Kanstroom, 2007). It was recently reported that approximately 50,000 migrants who were deported by ICE
between January and June 2011 were parts of mixed-status families that had U.S. citizen children living in the U.S. (see, Immigration Customs and Enforcement, 2011).

The number of undocumented migrant parents who are being forcibly separated from their U.S. citizen children is increasing because the overall rate of deportations has risen significantly over the last 10 years, while the forms of relief from deportation available to undocumented migrant parents is increasingly limited (Kanstroom, 2007). With the passage of IIRIRA, for example, the number of parents who could apply for “extreme hardship” --a legal claim that often allowed undocumented migrant parents to stay in the United States with their U.S.-born, citizen children--was reduced to a mere 4,000 (Kanstroom, 2007). Additionally, parents had to meet more restrictive criteria to prove to immigration judges that their families and their U.S. citizen children would experience extreme hardship if they were deported to origin countries after IIRIRA passed (Kanstroom, 2007).

More recently, the federal government has implemented “Secure Communities,” a nation-wide program aimed at contributing to increased collaboration of local law enforcement with ICE in arresting, detaining, and deporting undocumented migrants from the U.S. (see, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2012). This program prioritizes removing individuals from the U.S. “who have been convicted of a criminal offense, pose a threat to public safety, have repeatedly violated our immigration laws, or have recently entered the United States” (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2012). This program has also contributed to a significant increase in detention and deportation rates over the last year (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2012).
In addition to changes in federal policies, Arizona and Alabama have enacted omnibus immigration legislation that aim to increase immigration enforcement within the state (see, Morse et al., 2012). These pieces of legislation include provisions requiring law enforcement officers to determine the immigration statuses of individuals during lawful stops, creating state crimes and penalties for failure to carry federally-issued immigration documents, and making it unlawful for an undocumented migrant to work in these states, among others (see, Morse et al., 2012). States such as Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina and Utah crafted similar omnibus laws in 2011, and in 2012, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Rhode Island, and West Virginia introduced enforcement bills that also require law enforcement to verify immigration status during lawful stops, make it a state crime for failure to carry a federal immigration registration document, and create penalties for transporting or harboring illegal migrants (Morse et al., 2012).

Important to note is that since Arizona’s enforcement legislation was enacted in 2010, it was enjoined by a challenge from the federal government, and several other state immigration enforcement laws have been challenged since (Morse et al., 2012). Two provisions in Alabama’s legislation were enjoined in March 2012 (Morse et al. 2012). Oral arguments were presented to the Supreme Court in April 2012 related to the Arizona bill and a decision is expected to be made in June or July 2012 about the constitutionality of this piece of legislation. These state- and federal-level challenges show that even though states are increasingly introducing punitive immigration enforcement bills, they are not agreed upon by all of their residents, or by the federal government.

The numerous state- and federal-level changes in U.S. immigration and deportation policies and practices since 1986, have, nonetheless, contributed to an
increase in the number of undocumented parents who face deportation charges. Largely because of policy changes, a significant number of undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. have been forced to decide if they should take their U.S.-born children back with them to their often impoverished and violent countries of origin, or leave them in the United States to enjoy the rights of U.S. citizens but without their parents (Friedler, 1995; Wessler, 2011). While these threats and experiences related to undocumented status have been found to influence child outcomes and create challenges for mixed-status families, it’s possible that they manifest differently in families, like the participant families in this study, who have spent years (and histories) confronting family obstacles of geographic distance and separation. We know relatively little about transnational, mixed-status families in the 21st century, and how they experience and respond to emotionally complex situations related to their transnational experiences and the sociopolitical forces in their lives.
Chapter 2: Methods

I. Research Design

Overview of approach. This study explored the processes family members engage to maintain relationships across borders and over time and how these processes are affected by aspects of the transnational and sociopolitical cross-border contexts in which families are living. A grounded theory design, described below, was implemented to guide the data collection and analysis procedures through which interview data was collected from participant families and analyzed throughout this dissertation process.

Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted with at least one child and primary or secondary caregiver based in Guatemala, and with one U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent from each of the nine participant families, in accordance with tenets of grounded theory research. Additional interviews were collected from approximately ten key informants in the municipalities of Zacualpa and Santa Cruz del Quiché, in the department of El Quiché, Guatemala. Informants included teachers, faith-based leaders, and social work students from these areas. Four of these recruited informants served as guides and interpreters through the villages in Zacualpa where members of participant families lived. Interviews with informants provided additional insight into the challenges transnational and mixed-status families face and supplemented the data provided by interviews with families. Data were analyzed following the main procedures of a grounded theory design, which include the constant comparative method and the coding processes of open, axial and selective coding using NVivo9 software, with the aim of generating a middle-range theory that explains the phenomena under study. Throughout the entire dissertation process, several steps were taken to ensure
trustworthiness and increase the validity of findings.

**Qualitative research.** A qualitative approach was followed in this study so that individuals within this small sample of Maya K´iche´ families could give voice to the experiences, challenges, and strengths they encounter related to being part of transnational and mixed-status families in the 21st century. Moreover, very little research exists with families who identify as being mixed-status and transnational, and a thorough, in-depth qualitative study of these families’ experiences is a necessary first step to conducting research that could ultimately contribute to discussions of comprehensive immigration reform, a primary motivation for conducting this study. I also chose to follow a qualitative approach because my concern was for the quality, not the quantity of data collected. I wanted to be “saturated” with information on the understudied topic rather than focus on recruiting the largest number of participants possible to reflect on their complicated family experiences and how they were influenced by U.S. immigration and deportation systems (Bowen, 2006).

Additionally, because of the heightened level of vulnerability that these families experience, a transnational study with a large number of families would have proved untenable (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Furthermore, research with transnational and mixed-status families about the family processes in which they engage and the meanings family members make of their relationships in transnational contexts requires a qualitative approach, because such an approach analyzes the qualities of entities, processes, and meanings rather than attempting to measure their amount or intensity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

**A constructivist and participatory approach.** Some of the tenets of a qualitative
approach to research significantly overlap with the constructivist epistemology I draw from in this research, which I describe in more detail in the subsequent section on grounded theory. For example, as with many qualitative researchers, I view reality as socially constructed and believe that individuals develop in distinct contexts that influence the meanings they make of day-to-day life, down to their very perceptions of events and/or experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I also believe that every individual possesses knowledge of his or her own reality, and I value the participatory processes that activists and educators utilize to tap into and engage local and distinct knowledge systems by including research “subjects” in the process of exploring their own lives. I also value and strive to include participants in the process of redressing the oppressive systems influencing their lives (Freire, 1970; Lykes & Hershberg, 2012).

While I was the principal researcher in this dissertation and I did not rely on an explicitly participatory research design, I incorporated some of the participatory processes used in community-based research and participatory action research in the study. Most notably, toward the end of data collection and analysis processes, I returned to Guatemala to present the middle-range theory I had developed in this dissertation to family participants and informants. I made several presentations of findings and received valuable feedback from participants, which I incorporated in the final writing of this dissertation. When families could not attend the presentations, I visited with them separately to facilitate the process of member-checking, ensuring that my findings and conclusions did not conflict with the understandings participants have of the experiences explored in this dissertation. My approach thus combined elements of qualitative, grounded theory and participatory research.
Grounded theory. As mentioned previously, of the many available methods within qualitative research, the grounded theory method originally developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss was best suited to this study (LaRossa, 2005). I specifically drew from a combination of Charmaz’s recent adaptation of this method, as presented in her work *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2006), and the tools for conducting grounded theory described by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). In the following section, I describe constructivism and why I decided to follow this approach, arguing why a constructivist grounded theory fits the questions of interest in this study. I then explain how the approach presented by Charmaz overlaps with Strauss and Corbin’s manuals for grounded theory. This section concludes with a brief summary of how I employed a constructivist grounded theory research design in this study.

Epistemology and grounded theory. Charmaz’s approach to grounded theory encourages researchers to adopt and adapt grounded theory guidelines proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) so they can be used with 21st century methodological approaches (p. 9). It also allows for a more flexible implementation of grounded theory procedures in social science research. I chose to incorporate Charmaz’s constructivist approach as well as procedures laid out by Strauss and Corbin because they were in line with my own constructivist epistemology, and because multi-site transnational research often requires a combination of flexibility and structure (see, Amelina, 2010), which could be provided by following these resources. By relying on the best of Charmaz’s work and Strauss and Corbin’s easy-to-follow manuals for grounded theory research, I was able to develop a well-integrated set of concepts and
provide a thorough theoretical explanation of the social phenomenon I studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 5).

The subject of this study is the nature of transnational and mixed-status Mayan families’ relationships within and across borders in the context of punitive U.S. immigration and deportation policies and practices. As described previously, there is a paucity of psychological research with transnational, mixed-status families whose members are spread out between the U.S. and Central America. Furthermore, questions infrequently have been asked or investigated regarding transnational families’ maintenance of relationships in the current context of increasingly restrictive immigration and deportation policies, which separate families indefinitely (Caglar, 2006; Horton, 2009). Thus, little is known about the nature of familial connections among members of transnational, mixed-status families from Central America, despite research confirming that transnational family members do maintain family ties (see, Hagan et al., 2008; Levitt, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004, among others). This lack of knowledge suggested that some form of grounded theory would be the most appropriate method for this research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Constructivism.** A specifically constructivist approach to grounded theory fit this study better than a strictly Glaserian approach, or other alternatives, (e.g., Schatzman, 1991; Clarke, 2003), because my own views of research and knowledge generation are nested in the research paradigm of constructivism, which defines reality as socially constructed. Constructivism argues that individuals develop in distinct historical and cultural contexts that influence the meanings they make of their lives, including their daily perceptions of events and/or experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989 p. 43; Mills,
Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Spencer, 1995). Constructivist researchers explicitly and vociferously deny the existence of an objective reality and emphasize how research is influenced by and reliant on subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant and the co-construction of meaning (Mills et al., 2006).

*A constructivist and Strausian approach to grounded theory?* The constructivist approach to grounded theory developed and described in most detail by Charmaz (2000; 2006) has linkages to Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory work (1990, 1998). Several years ago, Strauss, departing from the Glaserian grounded theory model, argued that researchers construct theory as they interpret participants’ stories (Mills et al., 2006). While not proposing a constructivist grounded theory model outright, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) widely encouraged a post-positivist or relativistic epistemology in their writings about the grounded theory method (Mills et al., 2006).

Whereas Glaser argued and continues to argue that an objective, emergent reality can be presented in research and through a grounded theory analysis of data (e.g., 1977, 1999, 2002, 2005; with Strauss, 1967), Strauss and Corbin were clear that in research there is a multiplicity of perspectives and truths (1990, 1998). They also are clear about how their grounded theory guides enable an analysis of data that leads to the reconstruction of a rich theory reflecting the context in which participants in research are situated (Mills et al., 2006). While Strauss and Corbin (1998) admit that their application of grounded theory analyses to data relies on interpretive work, Charmaz is explicit about how the co-construction of knowledge is part and parcel of the grounded theory process.

Charmaz specifically defines participants as individuals with whom the researcher interacts to produce and co-construct meaning from the individuals’ experiences
(Charmaz, 1995). For this reason, Charmaz urges the researcher to stay close to participants by keeping their words as intact as possible in the analysis process (Mills et al., 2006). Charmaz (2006) also argues that while the researcher is entrusted to construct grounded theories “through past and present involvements with people, perspectives and research practices (p.10),” participants ought to be present in the research throughout (Mills et al., 2006).

Similarly, Charmaz, like Strauss and Corbin, admits that the researcher’s experience with the phenomenon of interest and the relevant literature influences the analytic process, thus, rejecting the Glaserian notion that theory emerges from implementing inductive strategies throughout the grounded theory process (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Strauss and Charmaz also agree that while the analytic method and research process are subjective, the researcher should strive for an awareness of when understandings, hypothesizing, and theorizing are coming from his or her own experiences, values, culture, or training, which may be different from those of the study’s participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) propose grounded theory steps that aid researchers in identifying when and how their subjectivity is influencing the analysis process. They guide researchers through grounded theory procedures that enable them to reflect on the very construction of initial broad research questions, and the hypotheses that form throughout the data collection and analysis process. Through this process, researchers can assess whether their findings are capturing the experiences of participants accurately, or forcing the data to fit the researchers’ preconceived understandings.
Grounded theory in the present study. While I agree with Charmaz that theories are constructed by the researcher and co-constructed through interactions with participants, I found Strauss and Corbin’s work (1998) useful for continually examining my own research hypotheses. I also appreciated the guidelines provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998), which allowed me to understand how the experiences I have working with the participants and my reading of the relevant legal and academic literature could contribute to, rather than hinder, the research process. While Charmaz (2006) argues for a constructivist approach to grounded theory, she follows relatively the same procedure as Strauss and Corbin in her own grounded theory work, which includes continually examining processes occurring within the data, making action central in the coding of data, and creating abstract and interpretive understandings of the data (p. 9). I strove to follow these guidelines in my own data analysis.

Also in line with Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory guides, Charmaz tries to focus on how participants respond to changing conditions, structural and otherwise, and the consequences of their actions on the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). She also is clear about how grounded theory research should focus on interactions between participants in a study and the context in which they are located, as well as how they make meaning of these interactions and contexts. This attention to how participants make meaning of things, and how these meanings influence participants’ actions, is linked to philosophies of symbolic interactionism from which grounded theory developed (Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2009).

This dissertation, and the analysis of findings in particular, explores structural conditions related to the sociopolitical climate in the U.S. as well as socioeconomic
factors in Guatemala that may initiate and/or sustain migration and transnational processes for the participant families. The analysis of data also tries to attend to the role of gender in family members’ experiences and in the interactions and relationships of which they were a part. These forces are attended to because previous research with transnational and mixed-status families has identified them as powerful influences on the migration and transnational processes for families at large (e.g., Dreby, 2010; McKanders, 2010; Parreñas, 2005; Schmalzbauer, 2008).

I explore the role of these various forces in individual participants’ lives and in the experiences of their families as whole, but I prioritized exploring the legal structures and social forces producing their undocumented migrations to the U.S., and what these structures and forces mean to the participants in this research, because I believe that there is a lack of information on the transnational effects of immigration and deportation policies on families across borders. I also believed that conducting research with migrants who are frequently referred to as “illegal aliens” apart from focusing on the systems that produce “illegal” migration reproduces “the very epistemological violence inherent in the ideological” construct of “illegal alien” (De Genova, 2002, p. 421). As I reject this social category, it was incumbent upon me to scrutinize its construction and the effects it has on the participants in this study, which is allowed by the constructivist grounded theory approach and procedures described by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

In sum, from inductively and critically analyzing data collected during this dissertation process, I aimed to develop a theory that contributes to understandings of the family processes underlying transnational, mixed-status family relationships in the 21st century (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This theory was built from constantly interacting with
the data in the research process and following Strauss and Corbin’s coding scheme (1990, 1998) in combination with the guidelines provided by Charmaz (2006). Taking Charmaz’s advice (2006), I made several modifications to the coding process and timeline prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) on an as-needed basis. In line with the basic tenets of their coding scheme, I attended to the conditions, contexts, action/interaction strategies and consequences linked to the exploration of transnational family relationships within and across the Maya K´iche´ families in this study as I moved through different levels of coding in the analysis of data (Kendall, 1999).

II. Participants

Over 200 million migrants are currently “on the move” throughout the world and this enormous migrant population is comprised of thousands of ethnic and national groups (United Nations, 2011). Millions of these migrants are also involved in transnational processes and include families who live between two or more nations. For these reasons, it is important to explain why, of the many transnational communities in the world, Mayan transnational families living between the U.S. and Guatemala were a fitting sub-group with which to conduct this study. While there are numerous reasons, the following section presents the strongest rationale for conducting this research between Guatemala and the U.S. with Maya K´iche´ families.

**Identifying and defining the population.** While the United States has a sizable and diverse foreign-born population, the vast majority of migrants are from Latin America and Asia. Even though Guatemalans do not represent the most significant sub-group of Latinos living in the U.S., it has been documented that 10% of Guatemala’s entire population of 14 million people resides in the U.S. (Central Intelligence Agency,
Because of the high rate of migration of Guatemalans to the U.S., transnational dimensions of family relationships are presumably a significant aspect of the lives of families who live in Guatemala in the 21st century. Additionally, current estimates suggest that of the 1.4 million Guatemalan migrants living in the U.S., 60% are undocumented (Davis, 2007). So it also is reasonable to assume the phenomenon of “illegality” has a presence in the lives of many family members who remain in Guatemala (De Genova, 2002), and a clear goal of this study is to articulate how “illegality” impacts transnational family relationships.

More importantly, current structural features of Guatemala, including its devastatingly low economic, human and social indicators, and experiences of post-war impunity, as well as excessive levels of community violence, contribute to the migration of Guatemalan migrants to the U.S. (Davis, 2007), providing a human rights incentive for migration research with this population. The difficult historical experiences of Mayan families in and from Guatemala also suggest that there is a need to focus debates and studies related to comprehensive immigration reform on solutions that could benefit this vulnerable population (Davis, 2007; McKanders, 2010).

**Research sites.** In addition to the above explanations, I chose to do research with Mayan transnational, mixed-status families because past and continuing experiences of discrimination that impact this community in Guatemala and the U.S. suggest it has characteristics in common with other disadvantaged, migrant communities, and that findings from this research could inform research with other migrant groups. I also chose to do research with this population because previous research has documented the participation of this ethno-linguistic group in transnational communities between the
Northeastern, U.S., where I live, and El Quiché, Guatemala, where I have conducted research previously (Brabeck et al., 2011; Foxen, 2007). I, therefore, had prior knowledge of and access to information about this population, which I drew from to direct the transnational research design for this study down to the details of recruiting participants who live in cities on the Eastern Seabord of the U.S., and El Quiché, Guatemala.

To develop this research initially, I followed the instruction provided in transnational research with other sub-ethnic groups of transnational migrants in the U.S. from the global south (i.e., Dreby, 2010; Foxen, 2007; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Levitt, 2001; among others). Research by lead transnational scholar, Peggy Levitt, significantly influenced some of the aspects of this study. In her work, Levitt (2001) found that many migrants from the same community of Miraflores in the Dominican Republic had settled in Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. Through her transnational research between Miraflores and Boston, Levitt was able to explore the behaviors and efforts engaged by members of this transnational community to maintain ties to these two nations simultaneously. The transnational community of Miraflores is one of many transnational communities that currently exist between the U.S. and the southern hemisphere.

Through my previous research experiences with the participatory and action research project “Human Rights of Migrants: Transnational and Mixed-Status Families,” formerly referred to as the Post-Deportation Human Rights Project (see, PDHRP, 2011) and heretofore referred to as the Human Rights of Migrants Project or the HRMP, I learned that there also is a transnational Maya K´iche´ community living between the Northeastern, U.S. and Zacualpa, Guatemala. Following in the footsteps of Levitt (2001),
I decided that I too would conduct a multi-site study that would provide another window into transnational life, focusing particularly on transnational experiences of the Maya from Guatemala. Once deciding that this dissertation would not only be transnational in scope, but also in the mode of data collection that I would employ, I had to determine whether the focus of this study would be on questions related to transnational communities or transnational family life.

Because most of the transnational and social science scholarship on Central American families seemed to focus on mothers in the U.S or children in origin countries but not typically the dyad, I believed it would be important to conduct research at the level of family that included at least a parent in the U.S. and a child in Guatemala (see, Horton, 2009; Pottinger, 2005; Schmalzbauer, 2004, among others). From the HRMP and the available literature on transnational families, I also had learned that alternative caregivers in origin countries are vital to the cross-border relationships migrant parents strive to maintain with children left behind, and all three—parents, children, and alternative caregivers—shoulder the burdens of poverty and undocumented migration (Horton, 2009; Moran-Taylor, 2008). This research has documented that leading up to their departures, migrant parents discuss and negotiate decisions to migrate with their children and the alternative caregivers with whom their children will be left, illustrating the shared distribution of their social and economic vulnerability (Horton, 2009; Pottinger, 2005). Based on this research, I was determined to recruit migrant parents in the U.S., children in Guatemala, and alternative caregivers in Guatemala from each prospective participant family. Even though I was sure to include alternative caregivers in this dissertation, I did not seek out specifically female caregivers and several families
include male caregivers, such as older brothers and grandfathers, as described below. The sample for this dissertation, thus, differs from the samples included in much of the research with transnational families (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), shedding light on the variation of transnational family configurations and caregiving arrangements made during migration.

In addition to exploring various aspects of transnational families while attending to caregiver experiences, I was interested in exploring the sibling sub-system and the presence of cross-border sibling relationships in participant families. Transnational sibling relationships were of interest because I had learned from the HRMP that many transnational families include children in the U.S. and children left behind in their countries of origin who attempt to forge relationships with one another across borders (Brabeck et al., 2011). I also was aware that transnational research as well as psychological research with families lack attention to sibling relationships (Minuchin, 1985). Because of the young ages of U.S.-based siblings, I was unable to include them directly in the data collection for this study, but sibling relationships were explored in interviews with various relatives in participant families in the U.S. and Guatemala.

Finally, despite the roles that various and diverse members of transnational families reportedly play in transnational family processes in the 21st century, transnational scholarship rarely seeks to understand how relationships across generations within a particular family are developed and maintained across borders and over time, and in the volatile context of “illegality” (exceptions include research by Dreby, 2010; Moran-Taylor 2008, & Pottinger, 2005). Moreover, researchers have rarely investigated how members of Mayan families, with their long histories of exploitation and forced
separation, are able to maintain relationships and care for one another across borders in the context of indefinite separation. Given these realities, it was clear that more research with Mayan transnational family members was needed that considered how “illegality” and differing geographies influence multiple sets of relationships within their families.

For these reasons, this study investigated the lives of various members of transnational and mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families living primarily between the Northeastern, U.S. and El Quiché, Guatemala. While time limitations did not permit the collection of interview data from every member of the extended kin networks within the participant transnational families, to understand the nature of some of the transnational relationships within each family this study included several members of each participating family spanning age groups, locations, and roles within the family. Specifically, this study sought to understand the nature of relationships in these families through interviews with children and primary or secondary caregivers based in Guatemala, and with an undocumented U.S.-based migrant parent in each family. This study aimed to explore whether and how these diverse family members maintained relationships in the above described contexts, and how they shouldered the burden of indefinite family separation and other strains brought on by immigration and deportation policies (Horton, 2009).

Because of the previous connections I had to the municipality of Zacualpa, in El Quiché, Guatemala, I tried to limit the research sites to Zacualpa, Guatemala and areas of the Northeastern U.S. where members of families recruited in Zacualpa were currently living. While the most significant population of Guatemalan migrants resides in California and Florida, there is a significant population of Latinos residing in states in the
Northeastern, U.S. and along the Eastern Seabord (Brick, Challinor, & Rosenblum, 2011). Several cities in the Northeastern U.S. experienced significant work-site raids over recent years with significant numbers of migrants being deported from the U.S. as a result. This influenced the initiation of the HRMP in 2008, from which this study developed and through which I developed ties to transnational Mayan families and communities (see Brabeck et al., 2011).

**Human Rights of Migrants: Transnational and Mixed-Status Families.**

Through four years of participation in the Human Rights of Migrants Project (HRMP), in both the U.S. and El Quiché, Guatemala, I developed relationships with members of the K´iche´ transnational community and the Sisters of the Franciscan Order who are involved in the social programs at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa, with whom HRMP researchers from Boston College have partnered. The partnership between Boston College and the social programs of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa was initiated in collaboration with anthropologist and Jesuit priest, Ricardo Falla, who had previous ties with Dr. Lykes, a researcher from Boston College and a principal investigator on the Human Rights of Migrants Project. Dr. Falla has longstanding ties to and research experiences with the K´iche´ Maya and the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa. I relied on these previous collaborations and ties throughout the dissertation process.

From contributing to the HRMP over several years, I also developed some knowledge of how the historical context of armed conflict in Guatemala, the current climate of poverty in Guatemala, and the sociopolitical context of deportation from the U.S. affects members of these communities. The prior knowledge and experience
significantly influenced the main research questions I developed for this study (Brabeck et al., 2011; Davis, 2007). From this prior work, I also learned about some of the developmental challenges caregivers and children in these unique family configurations experience in the 21st century. Finally, the data collection procedure for this dissertation was informed by my experiences conducting research with the HRMP in Guatemala and the U.S., from which I learned about barriers to conducting transnational research with K´iche´ families, and the salience of transnationalism for those on both sides of the border.

**Entry into the communities and relationship building.** Zacualpa is a municipality in the Department of El Quiché Guatemala that includes the town (pueblo) of Zacualpa and approximately 37 surrounding villages (see Monograph, 2010). While no exact data exists on the number of residents in Zacualpa, the mayor of the municipality suggested that there are approximately 40,000 people locally, with a significant percentage of the population currently residing in the U.S. (Monograph, 2010). It has been estimated that 95% of the residents in Zacualpa are Maya and K´iché speaking (Monograph, 2010). In urban neighborhoods, however, the majority of residents are estimated to be of mixed Mayan and European ancestry (ladino) and primarily Spanish speaking (Monograph, 2010). In the sample for this study, three transnational families included relatives who were based in the urban area of Zacualpa, and six transnational families included Guatemala-based relatives who lived in distinct villages of Zacualpa (see Table 2). No two families were from or had Guatemala-based relatives in the same village of Zacualpa, while the three families who lived in the urban area, and specifically, in the town of Zacualpa, were only several blocks away from the convent of the Church.
of the Holy Spirit, where I stayed throughout my dissertation work in Guatemala, and previously, when conducting research with the HRMP.

The data collection plan for this study and my presence in the communities in Zacualpa and the U.S., as described in more detail below, required constantly negotiating the goals of collecting sufficient interview and field note data from families to reach data saturation with the practical challenges and personal commitments of spending time with participant families in the U.S. and Guatemala to get to know them and build “just enough trust” with them (Maguire, 1987). I believed it would be important to visit members from each participant family in Guatemala or the U.S. several times throughout the course of this research, but this proved challenging at times, because participants in Guatemala lived in different villages of Zacualpa, or in the town, and families in the U.S. were located in different cities and states along the Eastern Seaboard.

To make the most efficient use of resources invested in traveling to visit families in the U.S., I almost always rented a car and planned visits with several families in one day despite their being spread out across different cities. During one trip, in January 2012, for example, I visited three families who lived in one city in Massachusetts, and later that day drove to Rhode Island to visit another family. In Guatemala, it was much easier to arrive at families’ villages and homes than in the U.S. Some villages were 10 minutes away from the town center on a microbus, and the cost of transportation was never more than four quetzales per person, or approximately $.50 USD (according to conversion rate on www.coinmill.com as of May 12, 2012, the exchange rate used throughout this dissertation). To get to families’ homes in the U.S., I had to spend at least $80 on a car rental and gasoline for the trip. I also had to find a day and time when at
least several families would be available and interested in visiting with me. These visits usually occurred on weekends because of U.S.-based relatives’ busy work schedules.

In Zacualpa, the most complicated family visits were those that required me to travel by foot and up and down steep routes that were too rough for minibuses. Some of these routes required hiking rather crude trails for as long as an hour, but all were doable and traversed daily by Mayan children, parents, and grandparents. These routes also included beautiful views of Guatemala’s verdant hills and pastures, which made the journeys especially pleasant. During several trips to the villages, I was able to get a ride in a pick-up truck or on a motorcycle from extended relatives of participant families. At other times, I would pay four quetzals ($0.50 USD) to ride in the back of a pick-up truck with as many as 20 Mayan women, men, and children who also were heading to their respective villages from the town center. While it generally was much easier to travel to villages, I would not have been able to arrive at the right villages or to identify the houses of participants without the assistance of the four informants who served as guides and interpreters throughout the data collection process. For example, when visiting a family in Guatemala who had participated in the HRMP and with whom I had become friends since traveling to Guatemala in 2008, the mother and head of household was shocked that I could not “by now” find her house after having visited several times over four years. In contrast, the interpreters who accompanied me on visits with families in the villages knew how to arrive at each family’s home in each village after one visit, despite their not being from that particular village or spending much time there.

Because I valued getting to know families, I sought to visit with participant families several times throughout this dissertation. I was able to visit with members from
each participant family in the U.S. and Guatemala at least four times throughout this
dissertation, and in some cases, as many as ten times. These interactions included the
longer and more costly trips to the apartments of U.S.-based relatives; informal meetings
with Guatemala-based family members in the convent of the Church of the Holy Spirit,
where I was based; visits to Guatemala-based relatives’ homes in their villages or in the
town; visits to the homes of participants’ relatives in other villages in Guatemala; and
taking casual strolls around the town with participants.

When I visited families in the villages, who often included older caregivers who
preferred to and were better at communicating in their native K´iche´ instead of Spanish,
the interpreters did their best to translate my questions from Spanish into K´iche´, and the
answers of participants from K´iche´ into Spanish. These interpreters were initially
identified by a friend and collaborator in the HRMP, who knew I was hoping to find
several informants from the community who could also competently translate K´iche´
into Spanish and Spanish into K´iche´, and were equipped to lead the way to villages
whether we were traveling by foot, pick-up truck, or microbus. When the four interpreters
spent time traveling to and from villages and meeting with families, I paid them a stipend
of 100 quetzales ($13 USD) per day based on this colleague’s suggestion.

In addition to physical visits with family members in the U.S. and Guatemala, I
engaged in many phone conversations with family members in the U.S. throughout this
dissertation. These phone conversations took place as I planned visits to families’
apartments in the U.S., shared plans with them of my upcoming trips to Guatemala, and
shared news with them from their families in Guatemala once returning to the U.S. I also
called families every few months to check in and see how their relatives in the U.S. and
Guatemala were doing. While I had intended to visit U.S.-based relatives soon after returning from visits with their relatives in Guatemala, who included their children, siblings, and often aging parents, this was not always possible, and phone calls served as a way to immediately “catch up” and relay to U.S.-relatives greetings from and news about their families in Guatemala.

It is important to note that in one of the participant families, U.S.-based relatives were located in a state along the Eastern Seaboard that I was unable to physically visit during the course of this dissertation. I built relationships with members of this family in the U.S. and interviewed them over the phone, and I visited their Guatemala-based relatives four times throughout this dissertation. The Guatemala-based relatives in this family previously participated in the HRMP, and I had spent time with them and had the chance to get to know them before the data collection for this study took place. I began communicating with U.S.-based relatives from this family in March 2011. This was soon after I returned from Guatemala, having spent time with the Guatemala-based relatives who had asked if I would be willing to take pictures of their village and mail it to their relatives once I was in the U.S. I sent the photos to their relatives and included a letter describing my relationship with their Guatemala-based relatives, which had begun in summer of 2008 during data collection for the HRMP, as well as my phone number should the family have any questions or want to chat. This initiated my communication with U.S.-based members of this family, which has continued since, as well as their participation in this dissertation although that was not its purpose at the time.

In addition to remaining in touch with families by phone, I have been able to assist families in the U.S. in locating lawyers and providing legal information when their
relatives or friends have been detained, or if they wanted to learn more about the legal process required for attempting to adjust one’s immigration status in the U.S. Through trying to connect these families with legal and informational resources, I have appreciated how difficult it is for undocumented migrants, who often do not speak English, to locate legal resources or information about their rights in the United States themselves, and to learn about the complicated process of trying to adjust one’s undocumented status.

The communication I have initiated and maintained with the nine participant families, in addition to the previous ties I developed with families and the Mayan community in Zacualpa and the U.S., allowed me to enter their communities and homes in Guatemala and the U.S. throughout this dissertation process. While I experienced obstacles to gaining access to the communities and recruiting family participants, as is described in more detail below, this research would not have been possible without the steps I took to get to know Mayan families over the last four years and develop “just enough trust” with them (Maguire, 1987).

Recruitment. While gaining entry to communities was a first step in the recruitment process, each family that I recruited had to also meet the inclusion and purposive or theoretical sampling criteria described below. I recruited families and additional informants who were spread out between Zacualpa, Guatemala and the Eastern Seabord of the U.S. during three phases of data collection. All families were recruited between June 2010 and December 2011. The informants were recruited between June 2010 and February 2012. The phases of recruitment and data collection, which occurred almost simultaneously, are described in Table 1.
Table 1
Recruitment and Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>June-December 2010</td>
<td>February-December 2011</td>
<td>February-March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>Zacualpa, Guatemala</td>
<td>Zacualpa, Guatemala</td>
<td>Zacualpa, Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Seaboard, U.S.</td>
<td>Eastern Seaboard, U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families Recruited</td>
<td>Families 1-3</td>
<td>Families 4-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informants &amp; Interpeters Recruited</td>
<td>Interpreter 1</td>
<td>Interpreters 2 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Interpreter 4 \ Informants 5-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was able to recruit each family because of either: Their previous participation or the previous participation of their extended family in the HRMP; their participation in the social work of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa; or the participation of their Guatemala-based children in workshops at Fe y Alegria—a combined middle and high school in Zacualpa—in 2008, 2010, or 2011. Important to note is that the workshops at Fe y Alegria were planned with and requested by educators from the school. In Appendix A are the workshop agenda, photos from the 2011 workshop, and a creative drawing from a youth who participated in the 2010 workshop, and later, in this study.

Demographics of individual participants and participant families are provided in Table 2. Pseudonyms are used in this table and throughout this dissertation to protect the identities of participants (see section on informed consent for more information). A genogram of each participant family is also provided in Appendix B (Figures B1-B9) to aid in the description of where members of participant families were recruited, and to assist in the explanation of who was interviewed in each family. Genograms were also an additional source of data, as is described below.
The first family recruited for this dissertation, Family 1, participated in the HRMP from its beginning in 2008 and fit the inclusion and purposive sampling criteria of including at least one U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent in the U.S. and at least one child and caregiver based in Zacualpa, Guatemala. The additional participant family who also participated in the Guatemala-based portion of the HRMP, Family 9, joined the study towards the end of data collection. I included this family, which is spread out between a state along the Eastern Seaboard and Zacualpa, Guatemala, because members of this family shared some of the theoretical sampling criteria developed in the later stages of this dissertation and facilitated deeper exploration of key themes developed from coding data of families recruited earlier in the process. Specifically, the U.S.-based undocumented migrant parents in this family arranged for their Guatemala-based child to migrate to the U.S. without authorization during the course of this dissertation. Thus, between June 2010 and January 2012, the transnational structure of this family shifted dramatically and the 12-year old child in this family, who had spent her life in a village of Zacualpa, had migrated to the U.S. I conducted interviews with U.S.-based members of this family through the phone because I was unable to physically visit them.

This family’s story was similar to that of Families 2 and 3, yet significantly different from that of Families 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. It was important to include this family in this dissertation, as the family’s experiences provided answers to questions developed in the earlier phases of data analysis about, for example, the different ways in which families confronted challenges of prolonged family separation, and how youth played a part in these processes. This family’s story also illustrated some of the variation in family
experiences and actions within the population of participants, which are important to include in the analysis of findings in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

As is described in Table 1, I began the major recruitment and data collection processes for this dissertation in Zacualpa, Guatemala during June and July of 2010. During Phase 1, I followed up with the recruitment of Guatemala-based family members from Family 1, and recruited Guatemala-based relatives in Families 2 and 3. Relatives from Families 2 and 3 were recruited in Zacualpa, Guatemala because children in these families participated in the workshop at Fe y Alegria about transnational families and explained that they were part of transnational, mixed-status families with relatives in the Northeastern U.S. or along the Eastern Seaboard and they voiced interest in being interviewed about their experiences. After the workshops, I was able to meet their caregivers in Guatemala, go through informed consent procedures with caregivers and then the youth themselves, and eventually conduct interviews with both (see below for more information on informed consent procedures). I also recruited the first informant who served as an interpreter in June 2010. This interpreter was part of the social programs at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa and assisted in facilitating workshops with youth at Fe y Alegria and in communicating with the caregivers in Families 1, 2, and 3. He continues to staff the office of the Human Rights and Migration Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala, which serves family members of migrants in the U.S. who are based in Zacualpa and its surrounding villages (see, Lykes, Hershberg, & Brabeck, 2011, for more information).

I continued to recruit and interview relatives in Families 1, 2, and 3 who were based in the U.S. from August to December of 2010. Because I had known the
undocumented migrant parents in Family 1 through our participation in the HRMP, it was fairly easy to contact, visit, and interview them once returning from Guatemala. In contrast, in order to meet U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent(s) from Families 2 and 3 for the first time, I had to communicate with them by phone after returning from Guatemala. Through the phone, and sometimes, voicemail messages, I had the challenge of explaining in strained Spanish my affiliation with the HRMP, my relationship with the Sisters of the Franciscan Order in Zacualpa, and how I had come to know their relatives in Guatemala. While I feared that some U.S.-based relatives would not return my calls given the threats they experience related to their undocumented statuses and their needs to remain in the shadows to evade detention and deportation (Lykes et al., 2011), parents in Families 2 and 3 called me back very soon after I had contacted them. I met the majority of the undocumented migrant parents in this dissertation in this same way. When families agreed to meet, we would typically plan for me to visit them in their homes. Once with migrant parents in their homes, I would explain my background in more detail, present brochures on the work of the HRMP, including pictures from our “Know Your Rights” workshops with migrants (see, Lykes et al., 2011 for more information), and ask family members if they were interested in joining the ongoing HRMP and/or contributing to my dissertation through participating in interviews about their transnational families. I followed this procedure throughout the recruitment process in the U.S. Despite the challenges that undocumented migrants in the U.S. experience when deciding how and whether to interact with institutions, authority figures, and relative strangers (see, Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2007, 2011), the U.S.-based migrant parents from all but one of the
families I had begun recruiting in Guatemala returned my phone calls and agreed to meet after I explained my background and the goals of this research.

While I followed the same recruitment process during Phases 1 and 2, I did have to recruit additional guides and interpreters during Phase 2 as the interpreter from Phase 1 was too busy to assist in the recruitment and data collection process in spring of 2011. Soon after recruiting an additional interpreter in spring 2011, she was offered a job that she could not pass up. She recommended her boyfriend, a competent teacher, to step in for her. Her boyfriend was the second interpreter recruited in Phase 2, and the third to participate in this dissertation. He also co-facilitated the workshops I led with youth at Fe y Alegria in spring 2011.

When I returned to Guatemala during Phase 3, in February 2012, I had recruited, interviewed, and analyzed interviews with nine transnational, mixed-status families who fit the inclusion criteria for this study. The intention of Phase 3 was to conduct follow-up interviews with Guatemala-based caregivers and other relatives from the three participant families (Families 2, 3, and 9) who had experienced a dramatic shift in their transnational family configurations by having a Guatemala-based daughter “illegally” migrate to the U.S. I also was interested in collecting data from key informants from the communities where families in Guatemala were based.

I wanted to interview caregivers about their experiences of the migrations of the children in their care to the U.S. Research has shown that when adolescents migrate to reunify with the parents from whom they have been separated for several years, they often experience sadness and mourning for their caregivers in origin countries and difficulties adjusting to their new family configurations (e.g., Artico, 2003; Suárez-
Orozco et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). While this research has strong implications for the psychosocial needs of newly arrived, adolescent migrants in the U.S. and the parents with whom they are being reunited, it often neglects the perspectives and emotions of caregivers and alternative caregivers who remain in origin countries. I also was interested in understanding the role of caregivers in facilitating the unauthorized and risky migrations of the children in their care to the U.S.

To conduct these interviews, I went to great lengths to learn from alternative caregivers about their experiences, providing information on the sociopolitical climate in the U.S. while trying not to worry them further about the presumed “unauthorized” presence of their grandchildren in the U.S. In addition to Families 2, 3, and 9, I interviewed the maternal grandmother who was the alternative caregiver in Family 1, because that family was about to experience significant changes. The undocumented migrant mother in the U.S. had just received asylum status and was planning to “legally” bring her Guatemala-based children, who had lived with their grandmother in Guatemala for over a decade, to the U.S.

In Phase 3, I conducted the desired follow-up interviews and shared the results of this dissertation with every participant family and key informants from the communities of Zacualpa and Santa Cruz del Quiché during group presentations or personal visits and discussions. These key informants included two teachers from Fe y Alegria, one of whom was the director of the school, two faith-based leaders who were affiliated with the Church of the Holy Spirit, and two social work students from Santa Cruz del Quiché. I also identified one more interpreter who could accompany me on a final round of trips to the communities and villages where family participants live. This interpreter was working
towards her teaching degree and, according to the Zacualpa-based colleague in the HRMP who introduced us, spoke excellent K’iche’ and Spanish. All seven informants from Phase 3 of this dissertation (including the interpreter) participated in interviews and/or feedback sessions regarding the results of my dissertation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Family Role</th>
<th>Year of Migration(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only nine families were included in the main sample for this dissertation, because the additional Guatemala-based caregivers and children who had an interest in participating and were interviewed as part of the data collection process did not fit the two main inclusion criteria. The first was that families had to include at least one Guatemala-based child who was at least eight-years old, a Guatemala-based caregiver who was the child’s mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather, or sibling and at least one parent who had been living in the U.S., and typically, the Northeastern, U.S. (with the exception of Family 9) as an undocumented migrant for at least two years. The second criterion was that once I returned to the U.S. I had to be able to contact the undocumented migrant parent in the U.S. and interview him or her. Participants were excluded from this study if they did not meet these inclusion criteria.

In exchange for families’ willingness to participate in this research, throughout the dissertation process I offered to deliver messages and packages, such as pictures, clothes and other cosas típicas (typical things) to and from Zacualpa whenever I would travel between the U.S. and Guatemala. I felt as if I often served as both an emotional and physical link for the families who were divided by borders. The transportation of messages, photos, and goods strengthened my ties with transnational families throughout the two-year interview and research process. This process also contributed to and informed both the ease of data collection and the substance of my analysis (see section on Reflexivity for more information).

Moreover, by transporting goods between Guatemala and the U.S., I was able to show my appreciation for the families’ participation and the stories and knowledge of
their lives that they shared. More importantly, I could provide families with personal
glimpses of the lives of their family members by sharing descriptions and taking pictures
of their relatives’ houses, apartments, villages, and terrenos (pieces of land). I had
learned, through previous research with the HRMP, that families who lived between the
U.S. and Guatemala appreciated this gesture as a dimension of their participation in
research. During the dissertation process, I personally experienced the benefit of being
able to serve as a link for families. I also constantly experienced the privilege and irony
of being able to travel freely between my nation of origin—the U.S.—and the origin
nation, towns, and villages of the “unauthorized” Mayan migrants in the U.S, while they
were denied this right.

Informed consent. I went through informed consent with all participants in this
study following the consent procedures that were approved by Boston College’s
Institutional Review Board (IRB) and included in the research application for this
dissertation (see Appendix C). I constructed and provided participants with appropriate
consent forms that were translated into Spanish throughout this dissertation. These
included consent forms for adults (referred to in Appendix C as consent form for
parents), consent forms for parents of child participants, and assent forms for participants
who were under 18-years of age, so they knew they could decline to be interviewed even
after their parents or caregivers provided permission for the interview. I also included
informed consent forms for key informants.

While caregivers in Guatemala had to give permission for the children in their
care to be interviewed for the interview to take place, when caregivers were not the
biological parents of children in Guatemala I asked them to discuss the research with the
biological parents who were often based in the U.S. before I would conduct the interview. All informed consent forms were constructed with strict adherence to IRB guidelines and included descriptions of how confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research process, when developing future publications that would come out of the research process and the limits of this protection. Consent forms explained to participants the benefits and risks of participating in the study and provided participants with my contact information and referrals to the Human Rights and Migration Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala, where services could be provided should the interview contribute to participants’ stress after the interview process and my departure.

Important to note is that throughout this two-year dissertation period, several families were involved in complicated legal experiences and processes that required me to take additional measures of confidentiality in the writing of this dissertation. The demographic information provided in this dissertation is minimal to protect the identities of participants, several of whom are currently trying cases in immigration court. While the municipality of Zacualpa, with an estimated 40,000 residents, from which participant families originated is mentioned throughout this dissertation, the names of particular villages of Zacualpa were intentionally excluded. The particular cities and states in the U.S. where participant family members live are also not described in this dissertation to ensure confidentiality.

**III. Data Collection**

**Method.** As previously stated, data collection began as soon as this study began, in June 2010 (see table 2) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data analysis was also necessary from the start, because it was used to direct subsequent interviews and observations.
(Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through this systematic and concurrent data collection and analysis process (which will be described at length in the next section), I was able to record many relevant aspects of the phenomena under study as soon as they were perceived (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process then guided me toward examining multiple realities of understanding and building a theory grounded in the co-construction of meaning between me—the researcher—and the participants (Charmaz, 2006).

I began data collection by reviewing secondary data, including the interview and field note data collected in 2008 as part of the HRMP. The 2008 data describe the context in which participants in this study were living two years before the dissertation process began. The review of some of this data was helpful for developing an initial understanding of the sociopolitical context in which participants lived and how these contexts may have changed from 2008 to the present. Included in this data sample were interviews conducted with individuals from Zacualpa whose businesses were built around assisting families in the U.S. with the sending of remittances to Zacualpan families. I also reviewed interviews with coyotes (human smugglers) involved in the clandestine migration process of many migrants from communities in Zacualpa to the U.S. These interviews described the setting of this research and aspects of the social reality in which participants in this study were living.

After reviewing initial data on the setting and structural conditions in which these families were living, I headed to Zacualpa for the official Phase 1 of data collection. I began data collection with interviews with children based in Guatemala from Family 1, as previously stated. I then met with educators at Fe y Alegria and planned the workshop I would facilitate with youth about transnational families, explaining how through this
workshop I hoped to meet and recruit additional families. After interviewing Guatemala-based children and alternative caregivers in Family 1, I conducted interviews with youth recruited from the workshops and their caregivers. I then returned to the U.S where I continued recruiting and interviewing the U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent(s) from Families 1, 2, and 3.

When returning to Guatemala in February 2011, I recruited the additional participant families and continued to employ the process of conducting interviews with Guatemala-based children and their primary or secondary caregivers after moving through informed consent procedures and recruiting youth through workshops at the school. In some of these interviews, as anticipated, I learned that the “caregivers” were actually the oldest siblings in prospective families who had both parents in the U.S. while they remained in Guatemala with the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings. Specifically, the caregivers in Families 4 and 5 were the oldest brothers (20-year old Carlos and 23-year old Mani, respectively) in the family. I expected that some of the interviewees would occupy dual roles and prepared very open semi-structured interviews for caregivers accounting for this variable from the outset. I did not anticipate that caregivers in Guatemala would be young men, as young men are over-represented in the U.S. undocumented migrant population from Guatemala and Central America at large (e.g., Brick et al., 2011). I kept this surprising factor in mind throughout the analysis, sampling procedures, and as I reflected on the study’s substantive research focus and findings. Specifically, when I would compare all participants in the sample who were caregivers to one another, as well as participants who were the children of U.S.-based
migrants, I would include sibling-caregivers in both groups, as they shared characteristics with focal children and adult caregivers.

As described in Table 1, each formal phase of data collection began in Guatemala. I believed this was essential to this study, as my previous research experiences with this population revealed that Mayan families in Zacualpa, Guatemala often have more time to participate in a research study than Mayan migrants in the U.S. This is because Mayan migrant parents in the U.S. often work multiple shifts, while their U.S.-based children attend very long school days. In comparison, many adults and elderly caregivers in Guatemala have no “formal” employment, and children attending school in the villages or towns only do so for a few hours every day.

**Procedure.** Data for this dissertation was collected in the form of field notes, reflexive journals, and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D). During encounters with participants, such as during visits or phone calls, I took field notes, which included observations and records of behaviors, events, and informal conversations that I believed could provide knowledge about participant family characteristics and/or experiences that could enhance the data analysis (Lofland, 1971; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). These field notes allowed me to keep records of aspects of family life that I observed during visits with families, such as descriptions of houses in villages of Zacualpa and/or in cities in the U.S. I also recorded aspects of the interview process, such as emotions and behaviors displayed by participants during interviews (i.e., crying, evasiveness) that could provide insight into the transcription and data analysis process. The field notes in this study answered questions related to who, what, when, and where and typically involved minimal interpretation (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).
I also kept reflexive research journals throughout the dissertation where I stored different types of memos and, in particular, feelings and introspections that I experienced during the research process that I believed might add an additional layer of insight to the ongoing interview, transcription, and data analysis processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland, 1971). I typically recorded thoughts, ideas, and feelings in these journals after meeting with and/or interviewing family members or leading workshops with youth at Fe y Alegría. These journals supplemented the field note and semi-structured interview data as they provided insight into how my own assumptions influenced the interview process and may have prevented me from learning certain things about participants, or responding as well as I could have to participants’ statements during particular interviews. Some of the notes I stored in these journals are described in more detail in the section on Reflexivity.

The semi-structured interviews were the primary sources of data collected during this dissertation. I always conducted interviews in Spanish and audio-recorded them, once participants gave permission for the interview to be conducted and audio-recorded. I began the interview process with generating genograms or family drawings with participants. Specifically, all interviews with adults began with the request of whether they would help me draw their family map so that I could understand who was in their families. From the raw versions of genograms that I constructed with families, I was able to create the more legible figures B.1-B.9 (Appendix B), substituting participants’ names for pseudonyms. All interviews with children who were younger than 12-years old began with the request for them to draw a picture of the family members “who came to their mind” when they thought about family (see Appendix E for copies of drawings). If
children were 12 or older, I asked if they’d prefer to draw a picture of their family or to aid in the construction of a family map. The family drawings that children created varied significantly in terms of the family members they chose to include in or exclude from their drawings. Several children, for example, chose to include themselves while others excluded themselves from the family drawings. One young girl drew only her relatives in the U.S., including extended family, while several other youth chose to only include Guatemala-based relatives in their family drawings. The drawings added an additional layer of insight into children’s and youth’s conceptions of family, and suggest that children and youth in the same municipality of Guatemala, with similar transnational and mixed-status family configurations, hold different meanings of family. These drawings also directed questions in the interview process.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Interviews with children were typically between 45-60 minutes, and interviews with adults were between 45-90 minutes. I chose these time limits because they were suggested as appropriate time limits for interviews that aimed to elicit informative and qualitatively rich information from participants (Morse, 2000). Questions in initial interviews were very broad and mostly focused on what family members did to “care” for children in Guatemala from the perspectives of parents in the U.S., caregivers in Guatemala, and adolescents in Guatemala (see Appendix D). These questions were open-ended so that the interviewees could lead the interview, but I also prompted interviewees at times to provide stories about their experiences in their families. Important to note is that interviews included questions about initial family experiences during early stages of migration, as well as questions about participants’ current experiences in their transnational families. These questions aimed to
gauge both participants’ reflections on the migration and family separation experience, as well as changes that may have occurred in family relationships or within transnational families over time, from individual participants’ perspectives. These data, as those of many studies that seek to explore change through inductive interviews, are thus retrospective.

Through analyzing initial interviews following the Straussian grounded theory procedures (see below), the questions eventually became more narrow and directed. For example, after learning from interviews with children in Families 1, 2, and 3 that phone calls from one or both of their undocumented migrants in the U.S. were meaningful to the children and viewed as an important part of their transnational relationships, I included specific questions in subsequent interviews about the content of conversations in which children engaged with their parents and the emotions children experienced when communicating with parents in the U.S. who they have not seen in many years. I also asked parents in the U.S. similar questions, to deepen the knowledge in transnational scholarship about the complexities of cross-border communication from the perspectives of multiple family members in transnational families. I also asked specific questions about the frequency of phone calling to examine whether and to what degree frequency of cross-border communication mattered to the Guatemala-based children in participant families.

After conducting and transcribing interviews with initial families, I imported the data into the NVivo9 software (see below) and began employing the constant comparison method of analysis and moving through the sequential grounded theory coding steps provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and described in more detail in Appendix F.
While I began the open coding process in Spanish and created in-vivo codes “taken directly from the language of the field of investigation” and the participants’ own words (see Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004 p.271), as I moved through the sequential coding steps and from open coding to more abstract and theoretical coding, I transitioned to English-language codes. Through this method I formed initial hypotheses about what might account for differences between participants’ interviews and then tested hypotheses through the addition and narrowing of questions in subsequent interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Subsequent interviews supported, confirmed, or disconfirmed the hypotheses developed in initial interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This strategy was followed throughout the concurrent data collection and analysis process in Zacualpa and in the U.S. The goal was to determine whether categories or substantive processes could be identified in interviews with children, caregivers, and U.S.-based migrant parents in transnational families that explained how these families maintained ties across space and over time, despite challenges related to the contexts of “illegality” that relatives in the U.S. encountered, and other contextual or personal strains reported by differently situated members of participant families. Through the constant comparison method, differences in the experiences and processes identified in interviews with relatives within the same family and across families could also be explored.

**Sampling.** As described earlier, the broad purposive sample for this study were members of transnational Maya K’iche’ families who lived between the U.S. and Guatemala, as this population is experiencing the phenomena under study, and I had already formed relationships with members of this population prior to beginning this study. I selected families constituted by children, parents, and grandparents, with at least
one parent living in the U.S. as an undocumented migrant and at least one child living in Guatemala in the care of a primary (parent) of secondary caregiver (i.e., sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle or other) to participate, in order to develop a theory to better understand the main strategies these families utilized to maintain cross-border relationships as well as the sociopolitical forces within transnational contexts that influenced their relationships. While I believed it was important to include this configuration of families in the research, it is important note that choosing to conduct research with these families who were divided between Guatemala and the U.S., and who were living with insecurities related to undocumented status, created further barriers to narrowing the sampling at the outset of this study. Participants were selected to generally represent various members of intergenerational and transnational, mixed-status families to fit the grounded theory criteria of achieving maximum variation within the participants and to fill gaps in the research with transnational, mixed-status families (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

*Theoretical sampling.* While variation among participants is an important component of grounded theory samples, theoretical sampling, a main feature of grounded theory research, is focused on concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations that emerge in initial phases of data collection and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because concepts are sampled in theoretical sampling and a priori theory does not determine the sampling, the exact group of participants within the larger population included in this study was not selected before this research began (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, the grounded theory method ensures that consistency in the sampling process is achieved through demonstrating how concepts that emerge in the data are
related to one another beginning in the initial phases of data collection and analysis. This process requires the researcher to link indicators of concepts in initial interviews with indicators and concepts present in subsequent interviews and observations, before collecting more data from additional participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

As mentioned earlier, in the first phase of data collection and analysis, interviews with children and Guatemala-based caregivers from Families 1, 2, and 3 were conducted and analyzed. These interviews were conducted and analyzed to meet the criteria of identifying and including representative concepts in the analysis from the outset, and because the transnational dimension of this research only allowed for a limited number of interviews to be conducted, transcribed, and analyzed concurrently in the beginning phase of this research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through conducting and analyzing interviews with these Guatemala-based children and caregivers, a range and representation of concepts related to the main research questions were identified. These concepts allowed me to narrow the research questions continuously and hone in on concepts in subsequent interviews, enabling the construction of a theoretical explanation from specifying phenomena of interest. For example, a phenomenon of interest that I identified early on in the data analysis process was “cross-border communication processes.” In the data analysis I specified this phenomenon in terms of the conditions that gave rise to it, which I identified as “availability of work for migrants upon arriving in the U.S” and “the presence of cell phones and cell phone towers in Zacualpa, Guatemala when parents arrived in the U.S.” This phenomenon (and others identified in the analysis) was also defined according to the actions/interactions related to it that participants narrated in their interviews. Some participants discussed “calling family in
Guatemala” and “buying tarjetas (calling cards) to make phone calls,” as actions that facilitated cross-border communication processes. A major consequence that resulted from the phenomenon of cross-border communication was articulated by children in Guatemala as “feeling tie is maintained because parents always calls [us] in Guatemala.” An example of a variation identified across this sample, related to this phenomenon of communication across borders, included family members within the same family providing different reports about the regularity at which they received phone calls from relatives across borders or called family members across borders (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Sample size and data saturation.** To estimate the ideal sample size for this study in its beginning phases I asked questions about the scope of the research questions, the nature of the topic, and the quality of data that could be collected within the confines of a transnational two-year study with families who experience insecurities in the United States, and potentially, fear towards members of U.S. institutions (Morse, 2000). These questions helped determine about how many participants could possibly be recruited for this study, and approximately how many individual participants and family units needed to participate in this study for data saturation to be reached (Morse, 2000).

For this study, I determined that the research question applied to Central American families living in very specific sociopolitical and geographical contexts. These families have relatives in the U.S. and Guatemala and have directly or indirectly been threatened by the U.S. deportation system (see Brabeck et al., 2011). Furthermore, these families are all Maya K´iche´, which is one of many Mayan ethno-linguistic groups in Guatemala. Therefore, the research question is somewhat narrow, but because it is being
applied to experiences of families within these specific conditions, to arrive at data
saturation there is a need to interview various relatives within various participating
families and not simply one member of one or two families.

Early on in this research, it was clear that I needed to set aside time for meeting
and recruiting prospective participant families, and for the interview process itself. This is
because I was planning to ask questions about family relationships and about family
members’ interactions with ICE in the U.S., which, as I learned from participating in the
HRMP, often evokes feelings of mistrust in interviewees and discomfort, especially if
they don’t understand why the questions are being asked in the first place. If I did not
take time to meet with families and explain my background prior to the interview process
as well as the goals of this dissertation, prospective interviewees would likely be very
resistant to answering questions in the interviews. I also learned from the HRMP that
Mayan family members in Zacualpa and in the U.S., including youth, parents, and
grandparents, are not predisposed to talking with extranjeras (strangers), nor amongst
themselves, about their family challenges and personal family issues. For these reasons,
before beginning formal interviews, I decided to allot a significant amount of time to
describing the goals of this dissertation to families as well as to explaining my previous
ties to the municipality of Zacualpa in El Quiché, Guatemala and to Mayan families and
communities in the U.S. from this area.

While I expected to be able to recruit families who had participated previously in
the HRMP with little trouble, I anticipated that recruiting new families who fit the
purposive criteria for this dissertation would be challenging. I was also unsure if
interviewees would be able to understand and reflect on their family relationships at the
level of depth required for theory development in one interview. Additionally, I anticipated that a sizable number of participants needed to be recruited as some would certainly feel awkward about the topic and choose to only answer some of the related questions, and possibly, in very few words. Moreover, because the topic may be emotionally distressing for participants (as it involves discussing separation from relatives over an indefinite period of time), some participants, I believed, would be less disclosing than others.

Morse (2000) suggests that when an investigator plans to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants in a study and anticipates collecting moderately rich data from each participant, that a sample size of 20-30 participants may be sufficient for a grounded theory study. Because it’s better to over-estimate sample size (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 2000), and because I anticipated conducting only a handful of follow-up interviews based on iterative analyses and the availability and willingness of participants to participate in follow-up interviews, I estimated that a sample of 40 participants across 10 transnational families would be sufficient for this grounded theory study.

Nearing the close of data collection I had interviewed at least two family members, and in some cases as many as six family members, from a total of 14 families. Because of limitations regarding the geographic locations of transnational families, the development of “just enough trust” (Maguire, 1987), and the busy work schedules of migrant parents in the U.S, I restricted the main sample of participants for this study to the relatives of nine families who met the inclusion criteria. I interviewed between three and six family members from each of these nine families, which totaled 36 participants. I
conducted follow-up interviews with approximately one-fifth of the sample, and specifically with eight participants who had experienced significant changes to their family structures during this dissertation and/or demonstrated an interest in doing a second interview. I also engaged in continual, informal conversations with family members throughout the dissertation process through the phone and informal visits, which allowed me to ask follow-up questions about particular family details or events but did not allow for systematic analysis of additional data. As data collection came to a close, and because of some of the significant changes and challenges I identified in the analysis of data from participant transnational families, I decided to include additional informants from the community in the data collected and analyzed. Interviews and/or group discussions with approximately 10 faith-based leaders or teachers from the community of Zacualpa, four of whom assisted with interpretation and accompanied me on trips to visit families, supplemented the data collected from interviews with 36 family members across the nine participant families. I stopped collecting data after analyzing these interviews with participant families and informants, as I was not generating new information or adding substantive categories to the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

IV. Data Analysis

**Summary of analysis.** I transcribed each interview in Spanish and interatively analyzed interview data following Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) guidelines for sequential coding in grounded theory which includes three levels of data analysis: open, axial, and selective coding (see Appendix F for more information on coding process). Open and axial coding was used throughout the research processes, beginning with the initial interviews and ending with the final interview. These techniques guided the theoretical
sampling described earlier. Selective coding was used towards the end of data analysis, once major categories were developed and the relationships between categories and properties of categories explained. Constant comparison methods were also used throughout the analysis process, ensuring that all data were systematically compared to all other data in the data set, and that all data was analyzed (O’Connor, Netting, & Thomas, 2008, p. 41). This meant that interviews with each child in each family were compared to interviews with every other child in each family, as well as to interviews with caregivers and parents across the sample and vise versa. Because I was interested in examining how transnational and mixed-status families functioned as a whole and in the variations between transnational, mixed-status families, I also made across-family comparisons throughout the analysis process.

**Memo writing.** I additionally followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) guidelines for memo writing throughout the data collection and analysis process. Memos are fundamental to grounded theory analysis because they keep the researcher grounded in the data and enable him or her to maintain awareness and some clarity regarding interpretations of the data. That is, memos assist researchers in seeing where their own responses to the data based in experiences outside the context of the study are exerting too much influence on the analysis process. Memos are considered so critical to grounded theory studies that, according to Glaser (1978), any researcher who neglects to use memos to theorize about codes and the relationships between codes while engaged in the analysis process is not doing grounded theory.

Throughout the data analysis I engaged in memo writing. I used memos to write about seemingly indirect relationships between concepts and categories as a means of
understanding these relationships and to eventually depict these relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I also used memos to keep records of the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The concepts I identified in the analysis were names associated with a word, phrase, sentence, or multiple words, phrases, or sentences in the data that was being analyzed (i.e. using “remittances” when interviewees talked about “mandando dinero” (sending money)) (LaRossa, 2005). The categories identified were variables that capture both similitude but also dimensionality among a set of concepts (i.e. cross-border parenting strategies) (LaRossa, 2005, p. 843).

At the end of data analysis, I had created over a hundred memos. Some were brief and served the purpose of tracking the thought process I used to define a concept. Others were much more substantive, such as the memos labeled “efforts to protect,” “child’s experience of parental migration,” or “consejos?” “life advice?”, which were used to guide my thinking and analysis of important events in interviews with caregivers and/or children and the identification or core categories (see Appendix G for an example). Memos took the form of code notes, theoretical notes and notes about the data analysis process. While there are no “wrong” memos, throughout the data analysis the memos I created became more complex, dense, clear and more directly answered the main research questions of this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 218). Through memo writing, the sequential coding process, and following Strauss and Corbin’s criteria for achieving rigor in a grounded theory study (1998, p. 147), I was able to identify a theoretical scheme at the end of data collection and analysis that explained the main process involved in the maintenance of relationships within transnational, mixed-status Maya
K’iche’ families. The theory is entitled: “Being present when *forced* to be absent” and is explained in detail in the next chapter.

**Computer software and transcription.** I used NVivo9 (see, QSR International, 2010 for more information) and Microsoft Excel throughout the data analysis process. NVivo9 is a qualitative data analysis software program that enables researchers to store and analyze a large quantity of audio, video, graphic, and/or textual data. I was able to import audio files into NVivo9 and use the software to transcribe interviews, which I did in Spanish. Important to note is that as I chose excerpts to include in this dissertation from the transcriptions, I added bracketed words in some excerpts for clarity and deleted words that disrupted the fluidity or clarity of the participants’ responses (Reissman, 2008). Deletions are marked with ellipses (Reissman, 2008). I re-listened to many audios as I chose excerpts for this dissertation, and corrected transcripts that I had mis-transcribed originally in consultation with a colleague from Guatemala who is a native Spanish speaker and ethnically Maya. I also consulted with this colleague as I translated the excerpts of interest into English for the write-up of this dissertation.

The NVivo9 software program was particularly helpful for coding data on the computer and for sifting through the data to compare incidents in the data with one another. More importantly, NVivo9 allowed me to organize the codes and move progressively from descriptive codes to more abstract codes. I was also able to rely on the memo function in NVivo9 and link memos to codes to record analytic insights and to track the creation of codes throughout the data analysis process. I eventually transferred much of the coding and analysis generated through NVivo9 to Excel to reorganize codes
and categories as part of the theory development and refinement process (see Appendix F for more information).

**Reflexivity.** Reflexivity is one of many tools for addressing the researcher’s influence in qualitative research. With this tool the researcher is able to confront and utilize her subjectivity and assumptions and critically examine how they influence the data collection and analysis processes within a co-constructive qualitative study. To engage in reflexivity the researcher must be mindful of and interrogate how personal characteristics and viewpoints inform the research process on an ongoing basis (Burman, 2006). Through engaging in the process of reflexivity throughout this dissertation, in both writing and in discussions with my dissertation chair, Dr. Lykes, I was constantly reminded of how the various frames I brought to this research influenced the data collection procedures I employed, the interview questions I asked through the semi-structured interview process, and the interpretations I made of the data during the analysis. While these frames are part and parcel of being the type of researcher and person that I am, it was nonetheless important to describe them at the outset of this dissertation, and to note their evolution throughout the process so that I could remain conscious of how and when I was deploying them.

**Language barriers.** One of the greatest challenges I reflected on from the beginning of this dissertation and throughout the research process relates to differences between my own ethno-linguistic background and that of the participants. Specifically, I am a White, Jewish, woman and native English speaker from Louisville, KY who “knows Spanish,” while the participants in this study are indigenous Maya K´iche´ from Guatemala, who identify K´iche´ as their native language and Spanish as their second
language. Because of our socio-cultural and language characteristics, I began the dissertation process concerned about the difficulties I would experience when trying to communicate my ideas and ask questions to participants in Spanish semi-structured interviews in ways that both respected and transcended our differences. To my relief and surprise, throughout the dissertation I was able to communicate with the majority of Mayan youth and adults in this project with some ease, as Spanish is their second language and I observed that many experience the same insecurities when speaking Spanish as I do. In U.S. contexts, for example, some parents (e.g., Lola, Family 4) talked about being “embarrassed” because of their lack of a formal Spanish education and how they felt more comfortable communicating with me than with other Spanish speakers because I also relied on grammatically incorrect Spanish. There were, however, several parents in this study who had several years of a formal Spanish education behind them and preferred to speak Spanish instead of their native K´iche´. These individuals not only spoke Spanish very well but also very quickly, which left me feeling embarrassed by my Spanish challenges and sometimes limited the number of questions I asked participants in response to their stories and interview responses. As the two-year dissertation process progressed, however, I noticed that these seemingly fluent Spanish speakers began to speak slower and with less complicated vocabulary when communicating with me, which I understood as parents trying to accommodate to my language barriers.

In addition to Spanish language challenges, the majority of participants in this dissertation grew up speaking K´iche´, and while I have learned a few phrases in K´iche´ since first visiting the El Quiché region of Guatemala in summer of 2008, I cannot communicate in this language, which also limited our conversations about family
and other emotional topics. I realized early on in the research process and continue to believe that some of the participants could not articulate their affective experiences during Spanish interviews with the same level of precision or depth that would have been possible if we were able to communicate in K’iche’. I also believe that some of the important experiences in participant families’ lives that are relevant to answering the research questions are missing from this dissertation.

To try to address this K’iche’ barrier, throughout the data collection process I recruited interpreters who spoke both K’iche’ and Spanish fluently and were familiar with the villages of Zacualpa and could, thus, serve as guides during trips to the villages. These interpreters accompanied me on visits with families and served as interpreters during interviews with older participants, such as grandparents, who preferred to communicate and felt more comfortable speaking in K’iche’ than Spanish. While I communicated with these participants through these informants, some of the aspects of both the questions I asked and the answers participants provided were undoubtedly lost in translation. Thus, the knowledge constructed in this dissertation and the results discussed in the subsequent chapter were constrained by these multiple language barriers.

**Outsider and insider moments.** In addition to these language barriers, my socioeconomic and educational background, as well as my identity as a foreigner from the U.S., created barriers to relationship building and constrained the knowledge constructed throughout this dissertation. This surfaced when participants, and informants in particular, questioned me about my motivations for this study. Several informants asked if I was only doing this dissertation about them and their communities to earn my degree and move forward professionally, implying that I was taking advantage of the
challenges transnational, mixed-status Maya K´iche´ families experienced for my own

111 gains. I felt defensive at these moments because participants did not seem to understand
how financially and personally challenging it was for me to travel to and spend time in
Guatemala relatively alone, or that this experience was not common for doctoral students
in psychology who often design dissertations that require minimal financial or emotional
obstacles. I also tried to remember during these confrontations that the Mayan
communities with whom I worked suffered from histories of exploitation in Guatemala
and, more recently, in the U.S., and had no good reason to trust anyone from the United
States or believe our motivations to be in their communities were “just” and not only self-
fulfilling (McKanders, 2010).

I had the presence of mind to respond earnestly to participants’ doubts as they
arose during this study, explaining how my social justice commitments and concern for
the human rights of the individual and the migrant as well as my educational
requirements led me to this research in their communities. I also conveyed to families
that while this dissertation would hopefully advance my own career, I also aimed to use
this dissertation to share the experiences of participant families with individuals in the
academy and the wider society to contribute to a more humane and comprehensive
immigration reform. Even though I stood to benefit the most from this work in the
immediate future, I explained how I genuinely hoped to use it to change public opinion in
the U.S. and improve U.S. immigration and deportation policies for the sake of migrants
and transnational families, and for the sake of the U.S. as a whole. While most families
and informants seemed to trust and even appreciate my explanations, it was clear that my
position as an outsider, and as a student with clear educational requirements and
incentives, constrained as well as facilitated participation of and relationship building with Mayan individuals and families throughout this dissertation process.

*Developing insider status.* In addition to these poignant experiences as an outsider, I experienced moments of being an “insider” that resulted from consistently communicating with participant families and developing relationships with them over the two-year dissertation process. Over time several families shared personal information and stories with me about their family experiences and challenges during our informal phone conversations and visits. Several families began calling me during the second year of this study to simply *saludame* (greet me) and check-in, and I did the same with them. I felt privileged and fortunate to be able to communicate with families throughout this dissertation as more than just a researcher at times, but I also had to remind myself to keep some distance so that I could continue to critically analyze participants’ experiences and the stories they shared.

*Overestimating my insider status.* I also experienced instances of feeling like an insider when hanging out with females, daughters, and sisters in this study to whom I felt I could relate and understand to some degree because of my own experiences as a female, daughter, and sister. I sympathized with women who were in charge of their children and households in Guatemala, while their husbands lived and labored in the U.S. without them. Early on in the dissertation I also realized that part of this process included mentally criticizing fathers who remained in the U.S. for many years without their wives and children, as I interpreted these men’s physical absences as a form of abandonment. It wasn’t until several mothers and children described their preferences for their husbands and fathers to remain in the U.S. and be physically absent but financially present in their
lives that I realized I was overestimating my insider status and passing judgment on family members based on my own emotions and assumptions. During these moments I also acknowledged that I was denying the women in participant families recognition of the power and resilience with which they confronted personal and family-level challenges throughout their family’s migration process. It wasn’t until meeting several fathers in the U.S. who expressed sadness about being separated from Guatemala-based relatives as well as desires to reunite with their family in Guatemala “when possible,” that I realized I was unfairly judging these migrant men and oversimplifying their emotional experiences and capacities based on previous knowledge and the ways in which migrant men are characterized in the research.

Becoming a physical insider? I also felt like a “physical insider” after recognizing that U.S.-based migrant parents in this study trusted me enough to let me inside their homes in the U.S. as well as inside the homes of their children and their children’s elected caregivers in Guatemala—from whom they had been separated for many years—to bear witness to “how the other half” of their families lived. I had permission from families to be physically present in the lives of relatives in both the U.S. and Guatemala, while family members were denied this right. With this privilege came great responsibility.

I saw how some transnational families were comprised of children in Guatemala who lived in very modest adobe homes with their elderly grandparents, while their U.S.-based parent(s) and siblings lived in apartments with cable TVs, Xboxes, and other U.S. luxuries. To be able to move back and forth between family members’ lives in the U.S. and Guatemala without judging their lifestyles, I had to reflect on what this particular
type of insider status meant for the ways in which I would critically view and theorize about transnational family relationships.

Growing closer to families. In addition to becoming a physical insider in the lives of relatives on both sides of the border, I began to feel that participants in the U.S., with whom I communicated regularly, were beginning to feel closer to me as the dissertation progressed. This occurred during and after second and third visits with families as several parents in the U.S. began volunteering personal and emotional information about themselves and their relatives in Guatemala when we were physically together and over the phone. Several family members in the U.S. also began texting photos of their children to my cellphone, which convinced me that we were getting to know each other better. I had similar experiences when visiting with families in Guatemala, despite the fact that I communicated with them less regularly than with U.S.-based participants due to the cost of international calls. I too felt closer to families after spending more time with them and began to share more about myself than was necessarily relevant to this dissertation. This occurred naturally, as I am generally an “open person,” but also because I believed it was important to share information about my family and relationships with participants as they had so generously and openly done with me during interviews and in informal conversations.

Challenges of becoming an insider. Despite my best efforts to compartmentalize the insider knowledge I gained, it did at times affect my interactions with family members on both sides of the border. Miguel in Family 1, for example, told me on several occasions that his children in Guatemala had become increasingly sneaky over the years, which they demonstrated by asking him to send them more money for school
supplies than they actually needed (see pg. 153). Without realizing it, this information influenced what I said to his children when spending time with them in Guatemala. For example, one afternoon after traveling with Miguel’s daughter, Deborah, from another relative’s village and arriving back in the town center when the sun was about to set, I said to Deborah, “I will give you money to pay for a tuk tuk (moto-taxi first exported from Asia to Guatemala in 2001, see, Girón, 2006) to get home quickly but you must promise that you will only use this money to pay for the tuk tuk and nothing else.” I would not have said this to Deborah if her father had not shared the anecdote about her remittances requests previously.

Many of these moments occurred throughout the dissertation. Writing about the development of relationships with individual participants, and the knowledge I had gained from these relationships in memos and journals did enable me to be conscious of when one interaction with U.S.-based relatives might influence interactions and interviews with Guatemala-based relatives and vise versa. For example, soon after visiting Guatemala during the first phases of data collection, I learned from a newly recruited U.S.-based relative that her Guatemala-based child had been severely abused by a caregiver figure in Guatemala. Although the child was out of harms way, having moved away from this caregiver soon after I heard the story, I knew I would have to interact with him again during the dissertation process and while transporting goods to family members in Guatemala from the U.S. I also knew I would have to mentally prepare for the encounter to be able to invoke the powers of reflexivity during the visit, and be able to keep the information I had about him in mind while simultaneously staying true to my research obligation of approaching interviews and visits with confidentiality.
**Assumptions.** While my language limitations and experiences as an outsider and insider influenced this dissertation, I also had several assumptions about the participants in this study and the data I would collect from them based on previous research experiences with the HRMP that I had to be aware of throughout this research. From working with transnational Mayan and Central American migrants in the U.S. before beginning the dissertation process, I learned, for example, that their marriages were often strained or fractured when one spouse migrated while the other remained in origin countries with their children. I, therefore, assumed that marital relationships within participant families in this dissertation would be strained and appear to be ruptured when spouses were separated from one another across borders and for long periods of time.

From my previous research experiences, I also assumed that participant families would most frequently be comprised of a mother in Guatemala who cared for children left behind, and a migrant father in the U.S. who lived with other men or with a new family (described below), as this was the structure of families with whom I interacted through the HRMP. I was surprised to realize mid-way through the dissertation that nearly half of the participant families included both parents in the U.S. and children in origin countries who were left in the care of an older sibling or grandparent. Despite the diversity within the sample of participant family structures, the interview questions I asked tended to focus on yielding information about features of relationships between U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based children, U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers, and between children and caregivers in Guatemala. This limited the knowledge that was generated in this dissertation about the relationships
between spouses who are separated by borders, even though I view this topic to be important to research with transnational families.

I also assumed that, in some participant families, male migrants in the U.S. would have settled down with a new family and have other partners in the U.S. and children by them, while their transnational wives and Guatemala-based children remained in Guatemala. I believed that when this would be the case, relatives in Guatemala would be privy to this information to varying degrees. For this reason, I began this dissertation prepared to keep confidential whatever information I learned from U.S.-based relatives that varied from the information presented by their Guatemala-based relatives, and vise versa. I, nonetheless, approached meeting migrant fathers and spouses who had lived in the U.S. for many years without their children and wives with a bit of apprehension and suspicion. This was especially the case if I had previously spent time with and gotten to know their wives and children in Guatemala. While I prepared to interview male migrants in the U.S. and possibly learn about the infidelities they had committed, I was fortunate enough to not have to experience this as all of the migrant men that I interviewed corroborated their Guatemala-based wives’ reports of being married and faithful to one another throughout this dissertation. Important to note, however, is that from the HRMP, I learned that when infidelities occur, family members in Guatemala and the U.S., including children, may not share this information with outsiders as they sometimes feel ashamed. In two of nine participant families in this dissertation, however, wives and mothers admitted that their previous husbands had historically been unfaithful to them, but in both cases these husbands were no longer a part of their families and did not participate in this dissertation.
I additionally assumed from my past research and knowledge of the population that many participant families would be living in poverty at the time of this dissertation but would share stories about and experience improvements to their lifestyles because of remittances from the U.S. To respectfully examine this assumption in the research, I tried my best to document the styles of houses in which Guatemala-based relatives lived, while also noting physical changes that occurred to their houses (such as the addition of rooms or appliances) throughout the dissertation. I also tried to ask open-ended questions about migration experiences so that families did not feel restricted to only discussing financial incentives and gains related to migration.

Finally, based on past interviews with youth in the HRMP, I assumed that children in this study would express a variety of emotions about their parent(s)’ migrations to the U.S. including relief, gratitude, and abandonment. I also believed that children’s responses would contribute to my emotions about their families’ transnational configurations and their parents’ migration decisions, which would then affect the interview questions I asked and the ways in which I interpreted the data. Even though my own emotional makeup and sensitivity did influence the research process, I kept them in mind throughout the dissertation to minimize the influence they would have on the data analysis and theory development phases of this work. I specifically committed time and energy to reflecting on my emotions in memos and through conversations with my dissertation chair to make sure they were not overpowering my cognitive capacities and exerting undue influence on the story presented in this dissertation. I also tried to ask children follow-up questions about the multiple emotions they mentioned in interviews to be as clear as possible about how they felt in response to their family’s migration.
processes over time and to capture the complicated experiences children had of their family’s migration processes and in their transnational family configurations. I avoided labeling children as only sad and angry just because I assumed they were sad and angry in response to their family’s separation experiences. As I describe in the following chapter, no child or youth interviewed conveyed only one emotion about the migration and separation experiences of which they are a part, and almost every child discussed having love for his or her parents despite their prolonged family separation. Children also revealed that they wielded some power in their transnational parent-child relationships, which may not have surfaced in this study if not for my engagement in reflexivity processes.

**Triangulation.** I was able to enhance the rigor and validity of this study by making use of what Denzin (1989) refers to as methodological triangulation and data triangulation. Most importantly, triangulation of data collection methods allowed me to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomena under study, which are transnational, mixed-status families and relationships in contexts of prolonged separation (Denzin, 1989). The data collection methods that I triangulated included semi-structured interviewing and multiple forms of note taking. I specifically collected data sources in the forms of semi-structured interviews with participant families and informants, field notes from visits with participants, and the journals that I produced after interactions with participants. The genograms and drawings that were constructed during semi-structured interviews also served as an additional data source that contributed to answering aspects of the research questions in this study.

While semi-structured interviews elicited very rich information from participants,
and were the main data source used in this dissertation, the complicated family systems in which participants were engaged were more easily represented by and understood through genograms and family drawings. Similarly, the details about the contexts in which families live in the U.S. and Guatemala were clarified through the use of field notes that described, for example, the neighborhoods and apartments in which U.S.-based relatives lived, as well as the properties and homes in the villages or town of Zacualpa where Guatemala-based relatives lived. The journals that I produced throughout the dissertation process allowed me to reflect on how various structural forces, such as immigration and deportation systems, economic conditions in the U.S. and Guatemala, and gender roles, among others, influence what participants share or omit from their interviews, as well as my own part in the research and knowledge-construction process.

I took minimal field notes during interviews, visits, and phone conversations with family members in the U.S. and Guatemala and produced more substantive notes after these interactions. These field notes recorded the content of informal phone conversations and/or described what families’ homes looked like and where they were located as well as non-verbal aspects of interviews or informal conversations that I thought might contribute to the interpretation and analysis of the data collected. Because I tried to be as present during family visits and interviews as possible, field notes recorded during interactions often consisted of bulleted points and/or brief observation notes. When I returned to the convent in Guatemala where I was staying, or my apartment in the U.S., I would elaborate on the notes I took during interactions while they were fresh in my mind. This field note method enabled me to document a significant amount of contextual data that influenced and enhanced the analysis of data for this dissertation.
From field notes, for example, I had a better sense of some of the challenges Guatemala-based family members within transnational families experienced related to economics as I often documented whether their homes included electronics or other signs of improvements related to receiving remittances from the U.S. These notes allowed me to understand how varying socioeconomic conditions may be connected to the varying perspectives and emotions reported by Mayan participants about, for instance, family members’ motivations for migrating and the hardships families experienced during separation.

While field notes were necessary for eventually theorizing about the potential impacts of structural forces in families’ lives, the individual interviews made it possible to gather a large amount of data over a short period of time. My skills as an interviewer, however, and the degree to which families felt comfortable speaking to me about their personal lives and relationships influenced the data offered by participants and the depth of descriptions they shared about their transnational lives, which made reflexive journaling an integral part of the data collection and analysis processes (Morrow, 2005; Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006). By collecting interview, field note, and journal data, I was able to gain more information and more varied information from and about participant families than would have been possible relying on one data source or collection method.

Triangulation also enabled me to examine and explain transnational relationships by relying on differently situated participants’ explanations and stories and my own interpretations of their explanations and stories, which enhanced the rigor of this study. By relying on participants’ explanations and my own analysis, I could be mindful of the differences between the positions the participants and I occupied, as well as differences
between participants in the same family, and how these influenced the data we each produced and the knowledge we co-constructed (Perlesz & Lindsey, 2003). Through utilizing multiple forms of data as well as reviewing relevant research for this study (see earlier review of literature), I was able to recognize how participants’ meanings of family and caregiving, and the perspectives they held of their transnational families, were informed by their dynamic sociocultural and socio-historical experiences. I was also able to acknowledge how my own background informed my interpretations of transnational families’ experiences. In field notes I recorded that within the same transnational family Guatemala-based relatives often lived together in one or two-room homes and several family members slept together in the same beds or engaged in “co-sleeping” patterns (Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, & Goldsmith, 1992), whereas their U.S.-based relatives lived in apartments with their the U.S.-based children, who often had their own rooms and always had their own beds. The U.S.-based relatives in participant Mayan families had living arrangements that were similar to my own, with parents caring for the children in the families. In Guatemala, grandparents and older siblings were involved in the caregiving of children in the family. It has been documented that for Mayan families, the shared distribution of caregiving responsibilities is commonplace (Rogoff, 1993). While this seemed to be the case for Guatemala-based Mayan family members in this study, this pattern varied among U.S.-based Mayan family members, which I believe influenced the variety of perspectives participants shared about family roles and caregiving challenges and my interpretations of both.

Triangulation of data allowed me to pay close attention to the similar and divergent reports provided by family members within the same family of the same family
characteristic, event, or experience (Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003). Specifically, triangulation in this research helped me to understand when relatives within the same family had congruent, complementary, or dissonant experiences of and reflections on the same phenomenon, such as communication across borders, and what this could mean in relation to the research questions (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006). Attending to consistent or dissonant beliefs, perspectives, and experiences of family members within the same transnational family improved the likelihood that the data analysis uncovered a “complex understanding” of how, why, and in what ways transnational family relationships are maintained over time and across space (Sands, & Roer-Strier, 2006).

**Rigor.** There are several ways that rigor can be assessed within a specifically Straussian grounded theory study. One mechanism for assessing rigor is incorporated in the theoretical sampling process. In theoretical sampling, coding and data collection occur simultaneously, which then leads researchers to question how well concepts fit and logically make sense within the context of the study and on an ongoing basis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviewing can either support or refute emerging theoretical propositions, which then lead the researcher to adjust theoretical propositions to fit the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, theoretical sampling ensures rigor by leading theory to be validated by data and variability captured within the data. Once these theoretical sampling criteria are met, existing literature can be used to further validate the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In addition to the measure of rigor incorporated in theoretical sampling processes, Strauss and Corbin suggest rigor can be assessed by following their list of eight criteria to determine whether the grounded theory developed from the study speaks to the issues and
the concerns of those who participated in the study (1998, pp. 270-272). The first four criteria on this list apply to the concepts generated in the study. These criteria ask if: 1. the author used concepts and explained how they evolved from the research, 2. linkages have been made between concepts, 3. categories that form from concepts are theoretically dense, and 4. variation is built into a theory so that it is clear that the concepts have been examined under different conditions and developed across a range of dimensions.

The fifth criterion is especially relevant to this study as it asks whether the explanation of the phenomenon includes the conditions under which it occurs. As I specifically investigated a phenomenon that is affecting individuals and their families in a unique sociopolitical position (e.g., the phenomenon of transnationalism has developed in and is connected to contexts of migration and deportation in the 21st century), it was important to ensure that the conditions participants discussed in their interviews were “woven into the analysis,” so that I could provide explanations about how these conditions influenced the events and actions participants discussed in the interviews.

The sixth criterion asks whether process was identified in the research and if the grounded theory developed in the research sufficiently explains actions of participants under changing conditions. This criterion helps readers of this research assess how the philosophy of symbolic interactionism undergirding grounded theory research, which prioritizes viewing people as actors in their social world, was incorporated in the research process (Smith et al., 2009). The seventh criterion asks whether the researcher drew on creativity and insight to analyze the data and produce significant findings. The eighth and final criterion forces the researcher to examine whether the concepts developed from his or her study will be meaningful to laypersons and professionals, used to explain the
phenomena of interest, direct future research, and guide action. As this study included transnational families who are affected in various ways by migration to and deportation from the U.S., the question of whether and how this study’s findings are related to immigration policy and could contribute to comprehensive immigration reform is very relevant.

**Truth-value.** The truth-value or trustworthiness of qualitative research refers to the standards that need to be met to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data (Morrow, 2005). Leaving time in the study design for several follow-up interviews was one way that trustworthiness of this study was strengthened. Additionally, at the conclusion of data analysis, member checking was employed so that participants could verify the data and constructed theory (Stake, 1994). The process of theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method, wherein interview questions were reviewed and emerging hypotheses were included and tested in subsequent interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), was another way for participants to be engaged in the research process and enhance the truth-value of the study.

Engaging in consistent memo writing and the process of reflexivity, as described above, are important in qualitative research and enhanced the truth-value of this study as well (Morrow, 2005). It was especially important to engage in reflexivity throughout this research because I followed a combination of a Charmazian and Straussian approach to grounded theory, rejecting the objectivist understanding of grounded theory as a solely inductive process and accepting, rather, that a researcher’s values and background significantly influence the research process (see, Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The reflexivity processes in which I engaged increased the fidelity to the Straussian and Charmazian
grounded theory analytical procedures in this study and the overall validity of this research.

I also employed an audit trail throughout the research process via memo writing and careful record keeping (of interview protocols, audio files, field notes, journals and transcripts), which helped me trace my steps throughout the analysis and afterwards. Last but not least, I consulted with my dissertation chair throughout the dissertation to help ensure the accuracy of the approach I followed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I specifically posed questions to my dissertation chair, and she periodically asked me questions regarding my coding process, such as how emerging themes were associated with other themes and whether I viewed a particular finding as substantive or peripheral to the research questions. This consultation process increased my confidence in the data collection and analysis processes and increased the truth-value of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Chapter 3: “Being Present when Forced to be Absent”

Summary of Findings

The goal of this study was to contribute to discussions about comprehensive immigration reform by exploring family processes within a sample of Maya K’iche’ families, all of whom are mixed-status and transnational. This study specifically examined the strategies family members utilize to maintain relationships through periods of separation, focusing on relationships between Guatemala-based children and their undocumented U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based children and their Guatemala-based primary or alternative caregivers, and Guatemala-based caregivers and undocumented U.S.-based migrant parents. The study resulted in the development of a middle-range grounded theory that explains the central process through which transnational, mixed-status family members develop and maintain relationships across space and over time, based on the experiences and perspectives reported by members of participant families (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Through the grounded theory analysis of interviews with Guatemala-based children, caregivers, and U.S.-based, migrant parents in each of the nine participant families, this study identified the process of “being present when forced to be absent.” Findings revealed that this process occurs as differently situated members of transnational, mixed-status families utilize cross-border family strategies to make efforts to be present in each other’s lives, with the most common result being that undocumented migrant parents feel they are both symbolically and practically able to be present in their children’s lives, despite their physical absences. This process enables migrant parents to be present despite the many obstacles that they, their children, and caregivers
in Guatemala report *force* the continued physical separation of migrant parents from family in Guatemala. Across the sample, the transnational separation of the family was described as a condition *forced* by U.S. and Guatemala contexts, as is discussed in Section II of this chapter.

The main family strategies identified as part of this theory—the core categories found in the grounded theory analysis of data—which U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based caregivers, and Guatemala-based children, who were all adolescents at the time of this study, engage in to different degrees, include:

1. Cross-border communication practices;
2. Remittances exchanges between the U.S. and Guatemala;
3. Exchanges of *consejos*, typically between U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based youth;

*Communication and remittances.* Communication practices and the sending of remittances have been identified in previous transnational scholarship as important elements of transnational parent-child relationships. This study strengthens this area of scholarship by providing rich descriptions and narratives of the meanings these processes have for multiple family members within transnational Mayan families, as well as the challenges different family members reportedly encounter as they engage in them. By exploring these processes while attending to family separation experiences over time, the research reported here also contributes an understanding of how these family processes may vary at different points in the migration and family separation experience from what is reported in the extant literature.
Defining consejos. In contrast to communication and remittances, consejos have rarely been identified in research with transnational families as a particularly important cross-border process. Rather, consejos appear in research with Latin American parents in the U.S. as a cultural value or a distinct cultural process (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valdés, 1996; López, 2001). Delgado-Gaitan, (1994) has described consejos as having a “Spanish connotation,” that implies “a cultural dimension of communication sparked with emotional empathy and compassion as well as familial expectation and inspiration” (p. 300). In her work with Mexican families in the U.S., Valdés (1996) viewed consejos as a type of culturally specific knowledge and discursive practice that had an educative purpose. Valdés (1996) defined consejos as “spontaneous homilies designed to influence behavior and attitudes” (p. 125). For Latino parents in the U.S., consejos are a way in which parents provide “explicit, implicit, and strategically ambiguous teachings” to their children (Villenas & Moreno, 2001, p. 675). Latino parents in the U.S. seem to use consejos to communicate and teach their children important lessons about life (Lopez & Vazquez, 2006). Scholars have also noted that for these families, consejos are a form of parent involvement and cultural capital that is grounded in the Latino experience (Lopez & Vasquez, 2006).

The scholarship on consejos suggests that Latino parents in the U.S. view giving consejos to their children as an essential parenting strategy that enables them to guide their children and to be involved in their children’s educational experiences (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; López, 2001; Valdés, 1996). Despite this, the strategy of consejos has rarely been recognized in transnational research with Latino families as a particularly valuable parenting process or aspect of transnational family relationships. In this study,
however, consejos were identified across participant families as an important cross-border family strategy utilized by U.S.-based migrant parents in their relationships with their Guatemala-based children, as well as by Guatemala-based caregivers in their relationships with migrant parents in the U.S. and with the children in their care in Guatemala.

While this strategy appeared to be an important family process within multiple sets of relationships in transnational families, the particular examples and definitions family members presented when they mentioned consejos differed even though they all described consejos as some form of “life advice.” Because consejos are discussed in research with Latino families in the U.S. as a specifically Latino parenting process, I consulted with a colleague who is ethnically Maya and fluent in Spanish to understand if and how Mayan families’ views and uses of consejos differ from the ways in which Latino families in the U.S. use them, according to the above cited research. The definitions he provided are elaborated on below. Based on this colleague’s suggestions, and the various definitions provided by participants, however, consejos are referred to as “life advice” when the English translation is used in this dissertation.

Exploring separation over time. As is described below, findings from this study suggest that the nature and make-up of transnational, mixed-status family relationships and the use of strategies therein, look different when comparing initial separation phases to long-term phases of separation for families who are separated across borders. Consejos, for example, were found to have the strongest presence in transnational parent-child relationships overall, and in particular, after children in Guatemala had been separated from parents in the U.S. for several years and were approaching or well-into
adolescence. This suggests that consejos may function differently at different points in the transnational family experience, that they mean something different to adolescents than to young children in transnational families, and/or that parents and caregivers give consejos at different frequencies over time and/or vis-à-vis the child’s age and/or developmental stage. These possibilities are explored in more detail below.

More importantly, in addition to initial and long-term phases of separation, findings from this study showed that all families were experiencing a prolonged phase of separation at the time of data collection. From families’ reports I was able to identify this phase of prolonged separation as a unique period in family separation experiences when Guatemala-based children, undocumented migrant parents, and caregivers recognize that the undocumented migrant parents in the family have been and are going to remain physically absent for much longer than they had initially planned.

**Exploring strains in transnational, mixed-status families.** In addition to the three phases of separation (initial, long-term, prolonged) and the family strategies identified in this study, transnational families and informants described how challenges family members experienced during their family separations were often exacerbated by the presence of multiple contextual strains occurring in or across phases. Through the grounded theory analysis of data, sub-categories were identified that classified contextual strains to transnational family life and cross-border relationships, including:

1. Individual and interpersonal developmental changes;
2. Factors of the U.S. sociopolitical and socio-legal climate; and,
3. Socioeconomic stressors in Guatemala and the U.S., including the challenges undocumented migrants experience to finding *trabajo fijo* (steady work) in the U.S.;
These strains were found to influence and be influenced by the strategies of cross-border communication, remittance sending, and consejos, as well as the particular separation phase during which these family strategies were being engaged. Because each strain reflects an aspect of the multi-layered, transnational contexts in which family relationships in this study occur, they often overlap. Additionally, because of the variability among participants in terms of personal characteristics, family roles, and geographic locations (among others), these strains affected and were affected by participants in different ways and at different points in the migration experience.

Another important finding related to the theory developed in this study is that several families leveraged the additional resource or strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family during the family’s migration experience so that family members who were previously separated across borders could be physically present in each other’s lives despite the systems that had reportedly forced physical absences on families. Specifically, within several participant families, U.S.-based migrant parents or Guatemala-based adolescents crossed borders and altered the transnational configuration of their families that had been established during initial stages of migration. In two cases, U.S.-based migrant fathers had chosen, in the past, to return to Guatemala to be physically present in their Guatemala-based relatives’ lives after several years of living in the U.S. In three cases, during the course of this dissertation, participant transnational, mixed-status families arranged for their adolescent daughters to migrate to the U.S. without authorization. An additional family was in the process of reconfiguring the transnational family as it was making arrangements to “legally” bring two of its
Guatemala-based children to the U.S. but these children were still in Guatemala when the data collection for this study concluded.

Regardless of which family members were migrating, or when in the family’s migration and separation experience this additional migration or “return” occurred, each instance of reconfiguring the transnational family appeared to be strongly connected to the previously identified strains on transnational family life from sociopolitical and socio-legal factors. This process also appeared to function similarly to the strategies families rely on to maintain cross-border relationships: the borders are crossed so that family members can maintain affective ties and connection over time. In such cases, the household configuration in Guatemala and the U.S shifts dramatically, with important implications for the families.

Grounded theory visual models

Figures 1 and 2 visually depict the findings (summarized above and elaborated on below) related to the theory developed in this study. In Figure 1, the main process of “being present when forced to be absent” and how it is engaged across participant families at different times in the migration and, thus, family separation experience is depicted. Centrally located in this figure are the three family strategies of communication, remittances, and consejos, which were identified as at the heart of the transnational family process of “being present when forced to be absent.” These strategies are depicted with overlapping circles of different patterns (see key in Figure 1 for more information). Within each circle, examples of what strategies look like during the different phases of family separation from the different perspectives of children, parents, and caregivers, are represented. As explained in the key, examples are included in bold font when they refer
to U.S.-based migrant parents’ experiences of a particular strategy, in regular font when referring to Guatemala-based youth’s experiences of one of the strategies, and in italics when an example of Guatemala-based caregivers’ experiences of a particular strategy is reported.

The phases of separation in the diagram are represented by the diagram being divided into three indiscrete sections that correspond to the step-like line at the bottom of the diagram. Even though the diagram is divided by the phase of separation (initial, long-term, prolonged), each third of the diagram includes the overlapping strategies and the presence of socioeconomic and socio-legal barriers (represented by intersecting, angled, dotted lines) that strain transnational family relationships and the strategies utilized therein. In each section, the circles are different sizes to suggest that communication, remittances, and consejos—while utilized by caregivers, parents, and children throughout the migration and transnational family experience—are engaged with different frequencies depending on the phase of separation and the developmental characteristics of family members.

Developmental characteristics and developmental change in particular is an important factor in understanding the different transnational family relationships examined in this study. This is represented in the diagram by a line at the top of the diagram that is adjacent to the line describing phases of separation. These lines are adjacent to one another because findings from this study revealed that developmental changes within individual family members and interpersonal changes within relationships occur as family separation experiences transition from initial, to long-term, to prolonged phases. Developmental changes were also important to explore as part of the theory
developed in this study as they sometimes interfered with family members’ engagements in the process of “being present when forced to be absent” and their utilization of different family strategies.

Below Figure 1 is Figure 2, which was created to illustrate the strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family. It shows how families leveraged this strategy in addition to the previously identified cross-border strategies to confront some of the negative consequences of prolonged family separation for U.S.-based migrant parents and their spouses and children in Guatemala. This figure demonstrates how transnational families in the 21st century not only exchange goods, communication, and life advice across borders to develop and maintain emotional ties over time, but also send for additional relatives or arrange for the return of migrant relatives to ease the strain of distance and separation on family processes and relationships. The illustration of this family strategy in Figure 2 represents how the process of crossing borders is a socio-legal one, and suggests how the changes that occur as a result can have powerful “legal” and life consequences for transnational family members.
Figure 1: Being present when *forced* to be absent: Communication, Remittances, and Consejos
Outline

The next sections of this chapter offer more detail about the findings summarized above. As the proposed theory is complex and includes interrelated parts, any single section necessarily overlaps with others. The first section describes and defines the middle-range theory of “being present when forced to be absent” that was developed in this dissertation to answer the research questions about how transnational, mixed-status families maintain relationships in the 21st century. Specifically, this section explains how this theory represents the core, cross-border family process engaged by transnational,
mixed-status participant families, and how it is engaged through the use of the cross-border strategies of communication, remittances, and consejos. This section also describes which family members within the nine participant, transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families are reportedly engaged in this process, which family members are disengaged, and to what degree. This section also clarifies the limitations of this process in explaining transnational, mixed-status family relationships from the perspectives of all of the members of these families living in the U.S. or Guatemala.

In the second section, the core strategies identified as part of this process are further defined. The participants’ own words are used throughout this section to illustrate the different meanings that these strategies have for diverse members of participant families, as well as the tensions family members experience in utilizing each strategy. Even though the sub-systems of spouses were not the focus of this research, there were findings related to how spouses utilize or do not utilize cross-border strategies differently than other sub-systems to engage in relationships, and these findings are briefly reviewed toward the end of Section II.

Section III describes the strains that various family members experience when utilizing the previously identified strategies in their family relationships. Because the preceding sections describe these strategies in detail while noting some of the obstacles transnational families experience when trying to use them, the discussion in Section III weaves the previously identified obstacles into a cohesive summary. Some additional excerpts from interviews with family members are also presented to further define the strains identified in this study that may influence particular sub-systems, such as sibling sub-systems, and how they exacerbate the challenges of transnational family relationships
overall. Here, the additional strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family is discussed as it strongly relates to descriptions of the sociopolitical and socio-legal strains, as well as to the strains related to individual developmental and interpersonal factors.

The final section, Section IV, describes the phases of separation experienced by participant families and elaborates on the existence and meaning of a prolonged period of separation for them. The data excerpts presented in this section illustrate family members’ understandings of prolonged separation as another aspect of their experiences that is forced by socio-legal and socioeconomic contexts in Guatemala and the U.S, and especially, by a broken U.S. immigration system. Here, the role of time in transnational, mixed-status family relationships also comes to the fore.

I. Defining the Middle-range Theory

**Being present when forced to be absent.** The main research questions explored the family processes that participant, transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families engage to maintain family relationships across borders and during varying periods of separation. From a grounded theory analysis of interviews with Guatemala-based adolescents, caregivers, and at least one U.S.-based, undocumented, migrant parent in each family, this study identified the core process of “being present when forced to be absent” and explained how family members described engaging in it to maintain relationships during separation.

**Being present.** This research found that differently situated family members in transnational, mixed-status families play some part in this process through the cross-border strategies of communication, remittances, and consejos. As families, and particularly children and caregivers in Guatemala and undocumented migrant parents in
the U.S., utilize these strategies the family perceives itself as functioning as a whole despite being spread out between two nations and including a parent or parents with precarious “legal” statuses and limited mobility. Even though the process of “being present when forced to be absent” and the strategies it includes are actively engaged by children and caregivers in Guatemala and undocumented, migrant parents in the U.S., this process appears to most strongly contribute to undocumented U.S.-based migrant parents feeling as if they are maintaining an affective tie to and presence in their Guatemala-based children’s lives. It also seems to enable parents in the U.S. to feel as if they are “parenting from afar” and maintaining some form of control in or attunement to the daily happenings and lives of their children in Guatemala, although the reported strength of this sentiment varies from family to family. Even though the undocumented, migrant parents in the U.S. in this study describe experiencing different levels of success when trying to maintain a presence in their Guatemala-based children’s lives, all parents in this research recounted attempts to be present and transcend the borders that keep them physically separated from their children.

**Forced absences.** The middle-range theory identified in this study also suggests that in order for differently situated family members to utilize the cross-border family strategies that are a part of this process of being present, they view the family’s separation between U.S. and Guatemala borders as forced by conditions that are out of their control. When children and caregivers in Guatemala and undocumented, migrant parents in the U.S. maintain this understanding of the causes of the family’s transnational configuration, their transnational, mixed-status family system is represented and described as if it’s maintaining its equilibrium. As discussed in Section IV, participants
within and across families identify the initial and sustained transnationalizing of the family as a reality forced by aspects of their transnational contexts between the U.S. and Guatemala. Specifically, undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. describe the family’s separation, both in interviews and to their Guatemala-based children, as a reality forced by the socioeconomic needs of their families in Guatemala, and by the sociopolitical conditions in the U.S. that limit the mobility of undocumented migrants between the U.S. and Guatemala. Children and caregivers in Guatemala conveyed the same understanding in interviews of why the family transnationalized and experienced prolonged separations.

**Limitations to transnational family processes.** Despite all participants voicing beliefs that their family’s transnational structure and separation experiences are forced by contextual factors, some Guatemala-based children question why families remain divided by borders for so long, and reportedly behave badly to their parents and in their cross-border parent-child relationships. Parents in the U.S. and caregivers in Guatemala report that this can take the form of Guatemala-based youth disengaging from cross-border, parent-child relationships or acting out during cross-border family processes, such as when communicating on the phone. When these tensions occur, they reverberate in the family system and are experienced as influencing or limiting U.S.-based parents’ abilities to maintain a presence in their Guatemala-based children’s lives.

Some families reportedly respond to the conditions that forced the transnationalizing of the family and family separation by engaging in the additional strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family and crossing borders, thereby altering cross-border parent-child and spousal relationships. The majority of participant families, however, describe the transnational and mixed-status configurations of their families as
resulting from a reality over which they have no control. Across interviews, narratives about migration and separation were dominated by differently situated family members’ understandings that migration and family separation are the only options for families because “no hay trabajo en Guatemala,” “there’s no work in Guatemala.” Participants also revealed their beliefs that family relationships will continue to occur across U.S. and Guatemala borders, and that prolonged family separation will persist for Maya K’iche’ transnational, mixed-status families. Many family members articulated this by using the fatalistic expression “qué puede hacer,” “what can you do,” when discussing the emotional difficulties of prolonged family separations.

While most families articulated beliefs that their only options in response to socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions in Guatemala and the U.S. were transnationalism and prolonged family separation, participants also suggested that their families were adjusting to their transnational configuration and its strains. Children in Guatemala reportedly maintained ties to parents in the U.S., and parents felt they were maintaining ties to their children despite being physically absent from their lives from five to twelve years across the sample of participants. Despite these reported ties, relationships between all family members in Guatemala and all family members within the U.S. who are part of transnational, mixed-status family systems do not appear to be equal (Dreby, 2010).

While U.S.-based children in Guatemala were not interviewed for this dissertation, from interviews with their U.S.-based, undocumented, migrant parents and their Guatemala-based siblings, it is clear that young children in the U.S. do not participate in cross-border family processes in the same way that their parents do to
develop or maintain ties to relatives in Guatemala. There is also some evidence that
Guatemala-based youth do not, across the board, feel strong affective ties to their siblings
in the U.S. even though they do feel a tie to them. The transnational sibling sub-system
cannot be explained by the process of “being present when forced to be absent,” although
transnational siblings do seem to sporadically communicate on the phone across borders
and adoringly ask to view pictures of each other. Some of the data related to this finding
is discussed in Section III, as different examples of strains to family relationships are
reviewed.

It is also clear from the theory developed in this study that transnational, mixed-
status families, like families that are based in the same region or household, encounter
significant strains and consequences related to the context in which family relationships
develop, characteristics of the family, and individuals within the family. The findings
show, nonetheless, that children and caregivers in Guatemala and U.S.-based, migrant
parents utilize cross-border family strategies to maintain relationships to one another, and
the most commonly reported result is that U.S.-based, migrant parents maintain
emotional and practical presences in the lives of their children in Guatemala.

Conclusion. The multiple aspects of the theory of “being present when forced to
be absent,” and how this process functions across and within the participant Maya
K´iche´ families in this study come to life in the next sections of this chapter. As each
cross-border strategy is described and exemplified using the participants’ own words, it
becomes clear how important processes of communication, remittances, and consejos are
to the maintenance of cross-border family relationships in the 21st century, and to the
functioning of family relationships within transnational families, whether these
relationships occur within one nation or across borders. The last section of this chapter also vivifies how family members’ understandings of their family separation experiences as *forced* contribute to the maintenance of transnational, mixed-status families throughout prolonged physical separations.

**II. Communication, Remittances, and Consejos**

This section describes what cross-border communication, remittances, and consejos strategies look like from the perspectives of U.S.-based undocumented migrant parents and Guatemala-based adolescents and caregivers. Because interviewees in each family differed in terms of the family roles they occupied, their day-to-day experiences in their particular developmental contexts, and their individual characteristics (i.e., age, gender, personality), there is significant variability in the ways in which they reflected on these family strategies as well as in the tensions they describe to engaging in cross-border relationships. To provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the transnational family relationships using the grounded theory developed in this study, each section presents the different perspectives reported by adolescents, their parents in the U.S., and their caregivers in Guatemala.

**Communication.** All participants described communication as a salient aspect of their cross-border relationships and an important part of family experiences in the U.S. and Guatemala. While the reported frequency of cross-border communication varied from family to family and even from participant to participant within the same families, adolescents and caregivers in Guatemala expressed feeling ties to the U.S.-based relatives from whom they were physically separated because they spoke on the phone. Similarly, U.S.-based migrant parents reported that communicating with their loved ones in
Guatemala was the way they maintained relationships across borders. Across families, communication practices often initiated by migrant parents in the U.S., although not without contextual strains, were the most important signifier of maintained ties. Every participant reported talking on the phone to relatives across borders on at least a monthly basis.

**Communication between U.S.-migrant parents and adolescents in Guatemala.**

While engaging in communication practices over time signified maintainance of relationships from the perspectives of all family members, for the adolescents in this sample it seemed that talking on the phone to their migrant parents had to occur early on in their lives in order for them to have a cross-border tie to their U.S.-based migrant parents and to maintain this tie to throughout the family’s separation. This is likely because 10 of the 13 undocumented, U.S.-based migrant parents in this study migrated to the U.S. when at least one their adolescent children who participated in this dissertation was 4-years old or younger. It is important to note that all 13 parents had at least one child in Guatemala who was younger than 4-years old when they migrated, but I did not interview every child in participant families as part of this dissertation.

From interviews with Guatemala-based-adolescents and U.S-based migrant parents in this study, it is clear that transnational communication was the main source through which they developed and maintained their parent-child relationships throughout the family’s migration experience and most of the adolescent’s life. Additionally, while 12 out of 13 U.S.-based migrant parents had memories of their children in Guatemala when they migrated to the U.S. (with the exception of Samuel, Family 9, who migrated before his daughter was born), some of their now adolescent children were too young
when their parents migrated to have memories of their parents at home.

As the excerpts below reveal, many of the adolescents in this sample only had the option of getting to know their parents through the phone, and some did not respond to this task very positively. The data also reveal, however, that every U.S.-based migrant parent reportedly persists in his or her attempts to create parent-adolescent bonds through the phone, regardless of his or her adolescent’s positive, negative, and/or ambivalent reactions to communicating across borders. Additionally, despite the spectrum of emotions reported by families, when asked directly about what their U.S-based, undocumented migrant parents did to care for them, (see Appendix D), all adolescent interviewees first listed that they called them from the U.S.

For example, when 12-year old Ben (Family 1) was asked this question in regards to his parents, who had both been physically absent from his life for the past ten years, he replied:

Pues cada día, cuando tienen tiempo, nos hablan. Nos llaman y nos dicen que están bien, nosotros decimos que estamos bien, que no han pasado nada, pues nos decimos… pues solo eso.

Well every day, when they have time, they talk to us. They call us and say to us that they are well, we say we are well, that nothing bad has happened to us… just this.

Similar to Ben, in an initial interview in summer of 2010, Jessica, a 15-year old teen from a village of Zacualpa (Family 2), described talking to her U.S.-based mother on the phone on a weekly basis, and why they communicated so consistently. She explained: “Cada semana [nos hablamos], como ella no esta cerca, no esta connigo…” “Every week we talk because she is not close by, she’s not with me.” Teodor, Jessica’s grandfather also confirmed that Jessica’s mother, Julianna, makes a strong effort to communicate
with her daughters in Guatemala. In response to the question of how Julianna is able to maintain ties to her children, Teodor replied, “ella llama cada semana, pregunta cómo están ellas, se asegura de que nadie está enfermo, a pesar de que no puede verlas,” “she calls every week, she asks how are they doing, she makes sure no one is sick, even though she isn’t able to see them.”

Leisy, a 16-year old girl in Zacualpa (Family 4), whose mother and father are both in the U.S., also described talking to her parents on the phone on a regular basis. Leisy relayed the conversations she typically has with her parents during the interview, revealing that usually the parents direct the conversations, offering consejos when they see fit. Leisy said that her parents ask: “Si nos encontramos bien y que nos comportemos bien a mi abuelita, y con mis hermanos que no hagamos pleito,” “If we are doing well, they say we should behave well to my grandmother, and that my siblings and I should not quarrel.”

Nina, a 15-year old girl who migrated to the U.S. in August 2011 as an unaccompanied minor to reunite with her father, revealed a year before her migration (in July, 2010) the value and effectiveness of the cross-border communication she had maintained with her father Mauricio, since he migrated to the U.S. in 2000. When responding to the interview question of whether it had been difficult for Nina to be without her father throughout a 10myear period, she answered, “no sé, porque me habla. Pero hay unas que se van alla, tal vez lo se van a la cárcel, por eso no llaman a la familia,” “I don’t know, because he talks to me. But there are others that [their parents] migrate and sometimes they are arrested, that’s why they don’t call their families.”

Nina’s comment illustrates the difference phone calls from a U.S.-based migrant parent
can make in the lives of their children, and in the views their children will hold of the quality of their relationships or of the difficulties of parental absence.

While Ben, Jessica, Nina, and Leisy all discuss their generally positive reactions to receiving incoming calls from their U.S.-based migrant parents, as well as the meanings they make of their parents’ efforts to communicate transnationally, Ben’s parents, Julia and Miguel (Family 1), recalled that Ben did not always accept their phone calls from the U.S. Julia and Miguel’s interviews provided support for the research finding that adolescents, like Ben, have agency in the cross-border communication process. Moreover, they suggest that teens like Ben can challenge transnational parent-child relationships and the communication processes on which they rely.

Miguel explained that even though he always called Ben: “A veces el no quiere [hablar]. Yo llama y no encuentro. Dice que anda jugando.” “Sometimes he doesn’t want [to talk]. I call him and can’t find him. They say he’s out playing.” Ben’s mother, Julia, expressed that Ben often “no tiene ganas de hablar,” “isn’t in the mood to talk.” When pressed about whether Ben’s disinterest in communicating might be a sign of anger at his parents for migrating when Ben was only two-years-old, Miguel reflected on the question and then replied:

No creo porque, desde que venimos, dejamos así pero siempre los llamamos siempre yo le llamo le explique que yo no hice porque yo no los quiero. Yo porque, sabe la vida, si yo estuviera en Guatemala no tuviera esa casa allá en Guatemala. Hay trabajo pero no pagan como aquí porque le economía allá. Si tu quieres tu casita no es fácil porque allá si ganas doscientos quetzales la semana si aquí ganas doscientos dólares es mucho. Uno puede hacer mas aquí que allá. Por eso a veces les digo eso. Pero yo entiendo que le hace falta el amor de el papa y la mama.

I don’t think so, because since we arrived and left them we always called them and I always explained to them that I didn’t do it because I don’t love them, but because, you know the life, if I was in Guatemala he wouldn’t be able to have that
type house over there in Guatemala. In Guatemala there’s work but it does not pay like here because of the economy over there. If you want your little house it’s not easy because there you can earn two hundred quetzals ($26 USD) a week but here you earn two hundred dollars, it’s a lot more. One is able to do more here than over there. For this reason I tell them this… but I also understand sometimes that this means they are without the love of their mother and father.

Miguel’s pointed reflection on how he has used communication to prevent his children from being angry at him and his wife for migrating and staying in the U.S. for many years suggests that parents are very intentional in the communication practices in which they engage, as well as conscious of the insecurities and anger their children in Guatemala can experience in relation to their absences. While the transnational mother of four, Cristina (Family 6), has also made attempts to maintain a stream of communication with her two children in Guatemala, she explains that her efforts have not left her with the same peace of mind that Miguel experiences. According to Cristina and her husband, Marlon, their children are sometimes resistant to talking to them on the phone. Cristina’s mother, Sabina, who cares for the children in Guatemala, confirmed that the children in Guatemala, and especially their son, Julio, are angry at their parents and do not want to talk to them on the phone. Sabina explained:

Saira ahora habla con la mama. Ahora Julio no quiere porque les dejo pequeño su mama dejo el aquí entonces cada vez que ella llama el no quiere hablar con ella.

At this time Saira talks with her mother. Julio doesn’t want to now because they left him when he was very little, his mother left him here. So now every time that she calls he doesn’t want to speak to her.

In spite of Julio’s refusal to communicate with his mother and father in the U.S., both parents report that they still try to call their children in Guatemala “a veces cada mes, cada quince, depende,” “sometimes every month, sometimes every fifteen days, it depends.” In this way Cristina and Marlon persist in their efforts to maintain a presence
in their children’s lives, even if it is somewhat irregular and ill received. The cases of Cristina and Marlon and Miguel and Julia suggest that adolescents in Guatemala can leverage some control in the cross-border communication processes in which they will engage (a topic that will be further discussed in a later section). These cases also suggest that U.S.-based migrant parents utilize phone calling more than other relatives in the triad explored here because they want to remain in contact with and present in the lives of their children in Guatemala.

Mani, a 23-year old sibling-caregiver (Family 5) confirmed this in his interview. He also suggested that while parents often have the responsibility of initiating transnational communication, youth and elected caregivers in Guatemala are also mindful and active in communicating with their U.S.-based relatives, especially when caregivers are also the children of U.S.-based migrant parents. Mani’s mother is Daniela, an undocumented migrant who has lived in the U.S. with her severely disabled, U.S.-citizen son Martín for 10 years. In 2008, Daniela’s unfaithful husband and Mani’s father died after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border for the third time in his life. Daniela is, thus, Mani and his siblings’ only surviving parent. As Mani explained, he and his siblings in Guatemala engage in very regular communication with their mother in the U.S. According to Mani, multiple times a week his mother calls or he calls her, like clockwork.

Tres veces [cada semana] y a veces solo dos y cuando no se puede, yo la llamo. Yo siempre la llamo pero siempre, siempre digamos como uno esta acostumbrado que llama tres veces verdad, y a veces ya no puede porque no se puede- verdad. Entonces yo llamo porque no me llamo o ¿qué?, de repente, esta enferma o uno no sabe verdad? La llamo para ver como está. Porque nos llamo y todo eso siempre hay comunicación.

Three times a week and sometimes only two and when she is not able, I call her. I
will always call her always, we say we are accustomed to talking three times a week really, and sometimes if she is not able, because one is not always able-right- I will call her because if she doesn’t call me, [I wonder] what if it’s because suddenly she’s sick or who knows why? I call her to find out. Because we are always calling and all, there is always communication.

Here Mani explains the active role he plays in communicating with his mother, who is also the mother of the siblings he cares for. It’s likely that the concern Mani has for his mother’s well being and his worried reactions to the interruptions they experience in their steady, cross-border communication pattern, reflect his dual role as a caregiver and as a child in Guatemala whose parent is physically absent, as well as the reality that he only has one living parent. From the excerpt above, it is clear that Mani has a strong emotional attachment to his mother and takes on significant responsibilities related to his role as a sibling-caregiver.

While Mani takes care of his two brothers who live with him in the town of Zacualpa, he also explained that he has a little sister, Elizabet, who lives in a village of Zacualpa and is cared for by their maternal grandmother. Mani noted that even though he is not Elizabet’s caregiver, he looks out for her and is sure to take his siblings with him to visit her on a weekly basis. Mani also reported that even though his sister Elizabet lives in a different household than he and his siblings, he knows his mother speaks with her on a weekly basis. Mani further revealed that when patterns of communication between his mother and sister are interrupted, the disruption worries his mother, who is making an effort to be present in her children’s lives through the phone. Mani explained:

Como ayer me llamó y intentó a llamar con mi hermanita. Porque ya había hablado ella conmigo el Domingo y dijo que ayer tenia que hablar con ella. Entonces no entró la llamada. Entonces llama conmigo preguntándome, “Que fué lo que pasó? Ya no están celular allá o porque no contestaron?” Entonces habla conmigo, pero sí siempre trata comunica con ella.
Yesterday she called me because she was trying to call my sister. Because already she had spoken with me on Sunday [the day before yesterday] and she told me yesterday she had to talk with my sister. She had called and the call didn’t go through so she was calling me and asking me, “What happened, do you have the cell phone over there or why aren’t they answering?” So she called me because she is always trying to communicate with her.

Even though Mani described his mother Daniela’s efforts to communicate with her children on a weekly basis as the way she is able to maintain ties to them from the U.S., it’s possible that Daniela’s phone calling also is the way she is able to be keyed in to the lives of her children from afar. It’s also possible that Daniela’s vigilant calling routine signifies her desire to maintain some control over her children’s lives and establish a family communication routine despite her physical absence. Whatever Daniela’s motivations are for trying to be present through the phone, neither Mani nor her 14-year old son Ruben voice disapproval, rejection, or annoyance in response to the communication they maintain with their mother. Ruben noted that when his mother called weekly, “siempre hablamos con ella, me pregunta como estoy, si estoy bien o no estoy enfermo,” “we always talk to her, she asks me how I am, if I am well or if I am sick.”

Carlos (Family 4), similar to Mani, cares for his siblings and lives in the town of Zacualpa. Carlos also engages in constant cross-border communication with his parents in the U.S. In contrast to Mani, at a precocious age 15 Carlos made the decision with his mother and father that he would take over the caregiving responsibilities in their Zacualpa household so his mother could join his father as an undocumented laborer in the U.S. and financially contribute to their children’s studies in Zacualpa.

In an interview in the U.S. in March 2011 with Carlos’s mother, Lola, I asked her the question I asked most U.S.-based migrant parents to understand how they elected the
alternative caregivers of their children in Guatemala (see Appendix D): “[Cuando decidió que su hijo va estar encargada, usted tenía un conversación con el, como, ‘ va estar encargada de sus hermanitos,’ algo a si? Que dijo a el?” “When you decided to leave your child in charge with someone else, did you have a conversation with him, something like ‘you are going to be in charge of your siblings,’ something like this? What did he say?” To my surprise, Lola responded with this narrative:

Me dijo a mi, mi hijo, como, no, aquí no hay trabajo- mi esposo apena nos mandaba cincuenta dólares- y no me alcanza porque no tenemos donde vivir. Tenemos que pagar donde vivimos comprar leña, pagar la luz, todo. Entonces yo dió a estudio al cincuenta dólares a la semana, no puedo, entonces mi hijo me dijo, yo hablé con él y me dijo, “me quiero ir para allá”. Y yo le dije si y él, le dije si, tiene que aguantar el desierto…yo le dije que si, no se quién va estar encargada a ustedes porque el mas chiquito yo deje el de dos años. Y el me dijo, “no te preocupes”—porque el creció mucho con el, con el duerme, y entonces el me dijó “el esta allá conmigo pues si te vas, anda, porque yo quiero estudiar. No queremos quedar sin estudio, tenemos que estudiar los cinco,” el me dijo.

He told me, my son, “well here there's no work”- and my husband struggles to send us 50 dollars a month- “and this doesn't pay for all we need, we aren't able to live on this.” We have to pay, where we live, we have to pay for oil, light, everything. So- and I pay fifty dollars a week for their studies...I am not able to do this. So my son told me, I spoke with him and he told me, “I want to go to the U.S.” And I told him yes, [I would go], I just don't know who will take care of you and be in charge of you [my children], because the littlest one, I left him when he was only two. And he told me, “Don’t worry”—because he grew up with him, he slept with him, and so, he told me, “I have been with him so if you are going, go, because I want to study. We don’t want to grow up without an education, we all have to study, all five of us,” he told me.

With this narrative, Lola revealed that Carlos, even as a teenager, was driven towards an education and for this reason accepted the responsibility of taking care of four of his younger siblings. Throughout the interview with Carlos in February 2011, and a follow-up interview with him in February 2012, it was clear that this 20-year old sibling-caregiver takes on many caregiving responsibilities but continues to communicate with his parents transnationally and receives support from them, which he especially values.
because he is a young caregiver with little prior training.

In February 2012, Carlos also corroborated his mother’s account of why he was elected to be the caregiver of his siblings. He explained: “Si a las quince, que me voy a iba por los EEUU, pero realmente la gente se van a decir. Entonces vino un profesor y dijo a mi mama ‘no está bien’ porque yo tenia capacidad para estudiar. Yes at 15, I was going to go to the U.S., but really people said, well a professor came and told my mother, ‘it’s not a good [idea]’ because I had the capacity/aptitude to study.” It’s possible that if Carlos’s teachers did not participate in the family’s decision-making, that he would have migrated as a teenager, while his mother remained in charge of his siblings.

As of spring, 2012, Carlos was still studying. He (and his mother) reported that he had attained a vocational teaching degree and was working towards his second vocational degree. All of his siblings were also in school. During the 2012 interview, Carlos also discussed how he and his U.S.-based migrant parents had continued to frequently engage in cross-border communication throughout their separation. He reported speaking to his mother on a daily basis and with his father on a weekly basis. His sister Leisy noted the same in 2011. Carlos also mentioned that talking to his parents on the phone was as much a source of support, comfort and, at times, sorrow for his parents in the U.S. as it was for him and his siblings in Guatemala. He also revealed that despite being only a young man, he sometimes feels inclined to cheer his parents up during their phone conversations.

When describing his parents in the U.S. and his phone conversations with them, Carlos explained:

Ellos están muy mal de emoción. Porque a veces lloran cuando no salgan porque, están triste por nosotros. Quiesieran vernos así pero no se puede estonces a veces están tristes pero yo les digo para supararnos tenemos que sacrificiar algo.
They are depressed. Because sometimes they cry because they can’t leave [the U.S.], they miss us. They want to see us but they aren’t able to so sometimes they are sad but I tell them to improve our lives we have to sacrifice something.

Lola, in the U.S., also commented on the sadness she experiences when communicating with Carlos and her other children in Guatemala, but how, despite this, she prioritizes speaking with her children daily. Lola also described how constant transnational communication is an insufficient substitute to being physically present in the everyday happenings of her children’s lives. She explained that she called her children “todo los días,” “every day” and prioritizes buying calling cards as her main “gasto” “expense”. When asked about the emotional effects of communicating with her children, however, Lola explained that it was first and foremost, sad. The example she gave suggested that phone calls simultaneously serve to connect parents in the U.S. to their children and other relatives in Guatemala while reminding them of the difficulties they and their children experience because of parental absences. Lola explained:

Hay triste. Porque a veces me pongo a llorar porque ellos han peleado allá. Cuando han peleado empiezan llorar y esto, entonces, yo me pongan llorar. Ellos allá yo no los miro como andan haciendo. Así, eso cambió cuando yo estoy aquí.

It’s sad. Because sometimes it makes me cry because they have been fighting over there. When they are fighting they begin to cry and this, well, it makes me cry. They are over there and I am not with them. I don’t see them, see what they are doing. So, it has changed because I am here.

While other parents also commented on the emotional consequences of communicating from a distance, parents mostly talked about the ease with which they engage in transnational communication and the emotional benefits it affords them. Miguel explained that he currently stays at home with his U.S.-citizen toddler during the day while his wife Julia is at work. Because Miguel is at home, he is able to talk to his Guatemala-based 15-year old daughter Deborah on the phone during the day, who he left
behind in a village of Zacualpa 10 years ago. Miguel explained: “Siempre, yo llama ella o ella me llama mi. Cuando yo no tengo trabajo ella me llama cualquier hora en el día.”

“Always, I call her or she calls me. When I don’t have work she calls me any hour of the day.”

Miguel also explained that the tone of his cross-border communication with his daughter Deborah has changed markedly as the strains of prolonged separation are currently lessening for the family. This is because Miguel’s wife, Julia, has been granted asylum and their children (Deborah and Ben), who have been without both parents for a decade, will soon be able to reunite with their parents in the U.S. Miguel noted communication in the past was often sad as their children, and Deborah especially, repeatedly voiced their disapproval of their parents’ prolonged stay in the U.S., saying “estamos esperando mucho tiempo…cúando van a venir?” “We are waiting a long time…when are you going to come?” In contrast, since hearing the news of their mother’s asylum, and the youths’ upcoming plans, Miguel explained:

Bueno ahora ella está más contenta que supe la noticia que ya ellos van a venir aquí entre los cuatro, cinco, o seis meses. Eso, ahorita no nos dice “cuando van a venir? Ellos nos dicen, “cuando vayamos!”

Well now she [Deborah] is a lot happier since finding out that they are going to come here between, four, five, or six months. Now they don’t say to us, “when are you going to come [home to Guatemala]?” Now they say to us, “when are we coming!”

From the above examples, it is clear that significant changes in Guatemala and U.S. contexts directly and indirectly influence the content and function of transnational communication and the emotions children and adults experience during transnational communication processes. As is discussed more in later sections, factors of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic environments in the U.S. and Guatemala also influence
the regularity of transnational communication practices, as does access to a means of transnational communication for undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. as well as for adolescents and caregivers in Guatemala.

**Communication between Guatemala-based caregivers and U.S.-based parents.**

While Guatemala-based caregivers in the aforementioned excerpts, with the exception of sibling-caregivers, most frequently spoke about how the adolescents in their care viewed or reacted to communicating with parents in the U.S., it is the case that Guatemala-based caregivers also participate in transnational communication processes. During interviews, Guatemala-based caregivers reflected on the transnational communication they maintained with the U.S.-based migrant parent(s) of the children in their care and provided responses to questions that illustrated the meanings they made of transnational communication processes and the value they placed on cross-border phone calls.

Across the sample, Guatemala-based caregivers had a range of two to six children in their care, and they described typically communicating with relatives across borders about these children. They explained that the conversations they have with U.S.-based relatives and parent(s) of these children are more logistical than emotional. The U.S.-based migrant parents with whom they communicated noted the same. For example, several U.S.-based parents discussed mostly communicating with the caregivers of their children in Guatemala about the errands they needed U.S.-based relatives to do for them, or their financial demands (both referred to as “mandados”). They also relayed having conversations with Guatemala-based caregivers about the needs (“necesidades”) of their Guatemala-based household. U.S.-based parents frequently relayed having conversations with Guatemala-based caregivers about, for example, the amount and type of remittances
they needed to afford the costs of Guatemala-based children’s school supplies, food, clothes and the like.

Important to note is that across participant families, Guatemala-based caregivers included spouses, parents, in-laws or the oldest children of U.S.-based migrant relatives. Despite this variation among Guatemala-based caregivers, migrant relatives in the U.S. and Guatemala-based caregivers emphasized the functional nature of their cross-border communication in interviews. Even though in three participant families U.S.-based migrant relatives were also the husbands of the Guatemala-based caregivers with whom they communicated, the conversations relayed by these participants seemed to parallel conversations between U.S.-based migrant parents and elected caregivers in Guatemala.

Spouses in Guatemala, for example, discussed communicating with their U.S.-based husbands to request remittances to support their Guatemala-based family’s daily needs. In some cases, wives discussed requesting funds so they could start their own informal businesses in Guatemala to supplement their remittance-based incomes. Parents and caregivers in participant families also talked about communicating across borders to check in with one another and make sure Guatemala-based children “no estan enfermos,” “are not sick.”

Only rarely did participants in this study who were involved in transnational spousal relationships relay having conversations with spouses about missing each other, or talk about missing spouses in interviews. This was expected, however, as I had learned from previous research that Mayan men and women, compared to men and women in the northern hemisphere, are not as inclined to speak emotionally about their spousal relationships with outsiders.
It was, therefore, surprising when Antonio (Family 8) an undocumented migrant father and husband in the U.S. who had been separated from his wife and four children in Guatemala for ten years, responded to the question of “es difícil estar sin su esposa?” “is it difficult to be without your wife?” with an emphatic and visceral seeming “pues, sí,” “well, yes.” The tone of his voice as he responded to the question conveyed a significant sense of emotional loss and strain. But when speaking about the communication he maintained with his wife, Marina, who lives in a village of Zacualpa as the caregiver of their four children and two of their grandchildren, he nonetheless explained that they spoke on the phone frequently, and most often about the needs of the family. According to Antonio, he calls his wife on a weekly basis, but when there is a “mandado,” “demand,” from Zacualpa, she calls him. Antonio explained that they usually speak on Friday because he calls her then but sometimes they speak on Sundays as well: “Ayer, viernes, yo llamé en la tarde. A veces llamo viernes, a veces llamo domingos, cuando tienen mandados se llama entre semanas, cuando tiene mandados uno, cuando no pues cada semana.” “Yesterday, Friday, I called her in the afternoon. Sometimes I call Friday, sometimes I call Sundays, when they have a demand we call [each other] during the week, when one has a demand [or errand] to discuss, otherwise just every week.”

The importance Antonio allotted to communicating with his wife and children in Guatemala came through as he explained that he is sure “a comprar un tarjeta día cinco, cinco minutos con ellos. ¿Cómo están allá? Uno no sabe que van a pasar. A veces apena,” “To buy a calling card every fifth day, for five minutes of talking to them. [To find out] How they are. One doesn’t know what’s going to happen. Sometimes one worries,” he explained.
Other U.S.-based migrant parents also discussed communicating about the demands caregivers had on a regular basis, as well as other day-to-day issues, such as the health of everyone in the family. In cases where elected caregivers in Guatemala were the parents of U.S.-based migrants (i.e., in Families 1, 2, 3, and 6), communication between parents and caregivers seemed to have an emotional undertone, which comes to the fore in the subsequent sections on “consejos” and strains to family relationships. Other U.S.-based migrant parents, however, relayed having conversations with the caregivers of their children to have an “insider’s” perspective on what was happening in their kids’ lives and to make sure what their children told them on the phone, about their own remittances needs, for example, was accurate. In this way, the relationship between U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers sometimes served as a means for parents to keep tabs on their children and maintain some form of control in their lives despite their physical absences.

Miguel (Family 1), for example, explained that he maintained regular communication with his mother-in-law, Paula, for the purpose of checking-in on his children in her care. According to Miguel, as his children had both entered adolescence, they were becoming more manipulative of their parents’ financial support. For this reason, he calls Paula to make sure the children in Guatemala are being truthful when they call with their “mandados” for school. Miguel, describing his relationship with Paula and the content of their communication, explained:

Como a ellos dejamos encargado, le cuidan, lavar la ropa como quiere, como si yo no le mandos, un poquito de dinero mensualmente como quiere así no me estoy cuidando, entonces por gusto hay que ser consciente no tampoco también …entonces por eso le digo sí. Sí, los niños. Le digo a mi suegra, a veces me hable con ella a veces le digo y ‘cada cosa que le piden en la escuela, hágame un favor – si le dice la maestra me pidió cien quetzales por un libro pero usted vaya
averiguar con la maestra si es cierto. Porque son inteligentes, porque dicen. A veces me pide cincuenta y a veces saber para que lo usan, por eso hay que estar encima. Darle, lo ponen mal uso—no sé. Compran cosas porque no vale la pena. Estoy pagando para ellos mal-usan. Por eso yo así le digo tanto como la suegra, tanto como Deborah, tanto como Ben.

Because we left them [with the mother-in-law] in charge, she cares for them, washes their clothes how they want… I don’t give her any directives, some money monthly, what she wants, it’s like this because I am not caring for them, so it’s a pleasure, one has to be conscientious, so for this reason it’s like this. I say to my mother-in-law, sometimes I talk with her and sometimes I say, ‘with everything they ask for, for the school, do me a favor, if [my children say] the teacher is requesting 100 quetzales ($13 USD) for a book, find out if the teacher is really requesting this.’ Because they [my children] are intelligent. Sometimes they ask me for fifty and sometimes you don’t know what they are going to use it for, for this you have to stay on top of them. You give the money– they may use it poorly– I don’t know. They buy things that just aren’t worth it. I am paying for them to spend money frivolously. For this reason I tell this to my mother-in-law the same for Deborah, and the same for Ben.

In addition to discussions around mandados from Guatemala, or day-to-day happenings of family in Guatemala, U.S.-based migrant parents communicate about the topic of returning to Guatemala with Guatemala-based caregivers (and with their children, see section III on separation). Raquel (Family 7), for example, a mother of three boys in Guatemala, communicates with her husband César, who has been living in the U.S. for 11 years, about the political situation in the U.S. and his thoughts on returning to Guatemala. According to interviews with both Raquel in Guatemala and Cesar in the U.S., César often explained how he wanted to come back to Guatemala and see his family, but that he could not because of the impossibility of circular migration.

Specifically, during an interview with Cesar in the U.S. in fall 2011, he relayed having conversations with Raquel about how he thinks he could return to Guatemala without problems if he wanted, but that if he and she wanted him to migrate to the U.S. again and, thus, cross the U.S.-Mexico border once more, the experience would be very
risky with the current level of border security. When recalling having similar phone
corversations with César in an interview in spring 2011, Raquel said:

A él no hay deuda, pero como yo le digo, que ya muy escaso el trabajo alla y si
el quiere venir y regresará ya no se puede también. El quiere pues a venir pero
también pero tal vez él tiene ganas venir otra vez y no puede. Por eso él dice
que no quiere también.

He [my husband] doesn’t have any debt, but like I was saying, the work there is
scarce and if he wants to come [back to Guatemala] and return [to the U.S.] in the
future, he would not be able to. He wants to come but if he would want to
migrate another time he would not be able to. For this reason he also says he
doesn’t want to [return right now].

Antonio (Family 8) also communicates with Marina about return. According to Antonio,
he and Marina often discuss the possibility of him returning to Guatemala, but like César
and Raquel, they believe it’s best for him to stay in the U.S. as long as he can. Antonio
explains:

Para que yo, mucho mis amigos, trabajamos junto para como dos años, y así se
fue y hay como seis meses estuvieron allá. Querían ir otra vez vine ya, pagó otra
vez, no sé cuanto pagó, y vine y no pasó. Ya pasó ya esta aquí en los EEUU y le
agarraron. Y vine otra vez y ya agarraron otra vez. Perdió el viaje- dos veces
perdió el viaje. Y trate y regresó y él esta en Guatemala…Marina me dijo que me
di cuenta mi esposa se dice que aquí no hay trabajo. Mucha gente quieren trabajo
no hay nada y están les costo azúcar, frijol, maíz, carro. Sufre allá-la gente allá en
Guatemala sufren. Sufren con hambre. A veces hay gente que comen una vez al
día. Porque que vas hacer?...Ella así me dijo que te venis está bien me dijo pero ya
no hay dinero [para] nosotros aquí…

For me, many of my friends, we were working together for two years and they
went [back to Guatemala] and when they wanted to come to the U.S. again they
came, they paid again [for the passage via a coyote], I don’t know how much they
paid, and they came and could not cross the border. They finally crossed the
border, were in the U.S., and then they were arrested [by ICE]. They came again
and they were arrested again. They lost the money they spent on the trip, they
paid twice. They tried and returned and are now in Guatemala. Marina, my wife,
told me she has noticed that there is not work [in Guatemala]. Many people want
work and there isn’t anything and it’s expensive to buy sugar, beans, corn. The
people in Guatemala suffer, they suffer from hunger. Sometimes people there
only eat once a day. But what can you do? This is what she tells me, ‘if you come
it would be nice but already there is no money for us here.’
Confirming Antonio’s story, Marina herself expressed that even though she misses her husband, she preferred for him (and her five grown-up children) to remain in the U.S. Marina explained that she communicates about this with them over the phone, saying:

Es mejor de que ellos estén allí porque si ellos si vienen como …darnos cuenta de que aquí ahora con cien quetzales ya no se puede comprar nada pues entonces mejor que ellos estén todavía allí. Siempre me encomiende a Dios porque no sabe en cualquier momento que los pueden agarrar y mandarlos.

It’s better that they are over there because if they came, I have noticed that with 100 quetzales ($13 USD) you are not able to buy anything so it’s better that they are there still. I always pray to G-D because no one knows in whichever moment [ICE] can arrest them and deport them.

In addition to these transnational couples, Guatemala-based caregivers who are the grandparents of the children in their care also report discussing return with the U.S.-based migrant parents. Sabina (Family 6), for example, expressed:

Siempre platiqué con Cristina, ahora con su yerno no tanto, pero Cristina dice cuando “comprémos un terreno vamos a irnos” y como los hijos que tiene allá ya tienen papeles dice entonces es más fácil que ellos se vengan.

I always speak with Cristina, with my son-in-law, not so much, but Cristina said that “once we buy our land we are going to come” and with the children they have in the U.S., they already have papers so it’s very easy for them to come.

Conclusion. From these excerpts it is clear that the question of return is a part of conversations between Guatemala-based caregivers and U.S.-based migrant parents, and potentially a part of family life for transnational, mixed-status families. As Section IV explains, although the return of U.S.-based migrant parents to Guatemala seems to be prolonged for a variety of reasons, children and caregivers in Guatemala are reportedly aware of these reasons and learn about them through cross-border phone calls. Additionally, from the conversations about return quoted above, it is clear that transnational family members, including adolescents and caregivers in Guatemala, utilize
cross-border communication as a strategy for understanding family separation experiences over time and across space. Cross-border phone calls also help maintain some balance within transnational, mixed-status family systems despite the emotional strains of physical separation. Through utilizing communication processes, undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. explain to their children and other Guatemala-based relatives why they believe returning to Guatemala could negatively affect their transnational, mixed-status family, and relatives in Guatemala update their migrant relatives in the U.S. about conditions in Guatemala related to migration and return.

As earlier excerpts in this section revealed, through the phone transnational family members are able to engage in some form of relationships with each other, despite obstacles related to physical absence and family separation. Children are able to grow up and be reminded by their parents directly of why they migrated and remain in the U.S. Parents, like Miguel, tell their children: “it is not because we don’t love you,” but rather, because of persistent economic strains in Guatemala. Children have the opportunity to act out their anger and sadness through the phone, or through refusing to answer the phone. And parents are able to reveal their own sadness and the voids they experience because of their inabilities to see their children on a day-to-day basis and have some control over their behaviors or misbehaviors (i.e., fighting). Additionally, children and caregivers in Guatemala are able to make regular requests to their U.S-based relatives regarding remittances and financial needs, and family members are able to have difficult discussions about when parents or spouses will be returning to Guatemala. Through transnational phone calls, relatives in Guatemala are also developing understandings of the difficult work and sociopolitical experiences migrants in the U.S. currently face. In
this way, family members in remote areas of Guatemala are receiving continuous updates and knowledge about the political and economic climate of a nation that is distant to them.

Prolonged separations create challenges for U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based adolescents, and Guatemala-based caregivers in Maya K’iche’ transnational families, but through the phone, some of these challenges are seemingly assuaged. Because of cross-border communication channels, transnational family members in the 21st century appear to be maintaining some form of connection and presence in each other’s lives.

**Remittances.** In addition to transnational communication processes, participants described the sending and receiving of remittances in the form of money, shoes, and clothes as a cross-border process that transnational family members engage. Participants explain that sending and receiving remittances alleviates some of the sadness and difficulties that accompany transnational family relationships and the physical absence of relatives. Participants in this study confirmed remittances are the means through which parental love can cross international boundaries (Horton, 2009), as well as undocumented parents’ main motivation for migrating to the U.S. While remittances have been identified in much of the extant transnational scholarship as an essential and emotional aspect of transnational relationships, this study found that remittances are only one of several important strategies viewed as meaningful to family members in transnational relationships.

Interviewees across the sample did not reflect on the role of remittances in their transnational family relationships with the same words or in the same tone. As with
previous research, adolescents in this sample were the most emphatic about the value of remittances to their transnational relationships (e.g., Artico 2003; Horton, 2009, among others). From the perspective of undocumented U.S.-migrant parents, remittances were a necessary result of and motivation for their migration to the U.S. as well as a financial burden. In contrast, Guatemala-based caregivers did not discuss negative consequences of remittance exchanges but rather matter-of-factly spoke of remittances as a natural feature of parental migration and a behavior in which U.S.-based parents engaged that confirmed they were constantly working and sacrificing for their children.

In addition to interviews with family members, informant interviews provided significant insight into the topic of remittances. Teachers from Zacualpa, for example, corroborated the view reported by some parents in the U.S. that remittance processes are accompanied by conflict and strain. Teachers specifically expressed concern for the youth in Guatemala who received remittances directly from their parents and were “malgastando,” “frivolously spending” them as opposed to investing them in their futures. Informants from the Church of the Holy Spirit in Zacualpa, Guatemala, also reported that remittances sometimes had a toxic effect on the young people in Guatemala, as they brought with them the greed and materialism experienced in the U.S. Below, some examples of the variety of perspectives on and experiences with remittances are discussed to illustrate how this strategy is utilized within transnational family relationships, and how it affects different members of transnational families.

**Experiences with remittances for adolescents in Guatemala.** As mentioned previously, the majority of adolescents in this sample had been separated from their U.S-based migrant parent(s) since they were very young. This explains why many young
interviewees in this study were introduced to their parents through receiving remittances from the U.S. It additionally adds insight into the finding that many adolescents in this study grew up associating remittances with positive emotions.

For example, Julia (Family 1), a U.S.-migrant parent, recalled that the first conversation she had with her son Ben, who is now an early adolescent, was about a bicycle. According to Julia, very soon after she and her husband Miguel arrived in the U.S., their son began making his remittance requests. Julia laughingly said: “La primera cosa que el me dice por teléfono era que el quería un bicicleta...decíamos que vamos a trabajar y cuando podemos mandaremos a él.” “The first thing that he said to me on the phone was that he wanted a bicycle. We said that we would work and when we were able we would send one to him.”

Similarly, 12-year old Yesenia’s, grandmother Veronica (Family 3), discussed how although Yesenia was sad when her mother Julianna first migrated, the expectation and experience of receiving remittances in the mail from her mother cheered Yesenia up. Yesenia was only four when her mother initially migrated. When recalling the effect remittances had on her granddaughter, Veronica said:

Ya sabe que su mama se fué a los Estados y era triste pues triste caundo ya se fue tal vez llora. Después no dice nada. No está triste, un poco. [Porque] su mama está en los EEUU y manda pisto, reir... cuantos ropas, zapatos!

She knew her mother went to the U.S. and she was sad. When the mother left she cried maybe. After that she didn’t say anything. She wasn’t sad, a little maybe. Because her mother is in the U.S. and sends money, she smiles... how many clothes [she receives], shoes!

Yesenia also talked about the happiness she experiences when she receives remittances from her mother. When asked in an interview in February 2012 about how she felt regarding her mother’s prolonged stay in the U.S. and the recent migration of her
sister, Jessica, to join her mother, Yesenia replied: “[Me siento] feliz porque mi mama está allá y estoy aquí y ella me manda cosas.” “I feel happy because my mother is there and I am here and she sends me things.” Important to note is that as Yesenia was discussing her supposed happiness in regards to her mother’s and sister’s presences in the U.S., and the material goods she accrues as a result, she was crying. It seemed as if Yesenia was saying she knew she should feel happy because her mother was in the U.S. and working to send her money and things, but in reality, she experienced a sense of loss and sadness because of her mother’s and now her sister’s physical absence. When I asked Yesenia’s grandmother, Veronica, if she thought her granddaughter was sad, she said no, that she didn’t know why she was crying. This experience suggested that neither Yesenia, nor her grandmother, were used to communicating directly about their emotions. It also reminded me of the interview I conducted with Yesenia’s sister, Jessica, in the summer of 2010, when Jessica explained how sometimes her grandmother doesn’t understand her.

Ben (Family 1) also discussed the happiness he experiences when receiving remittances from his parents during our interview in February 2011. Unlike Yesenia, he appeared to be genuinely happy when talking about remittances. Throughout the interview, Ben expressed the following in regard to remittances:

Me dan animo porque cuando ellos están allá, cuando mandan nuestras cosas, nosotros vamos estar contenta porque mis abuelitos nos están cuidando, y mi tía y cuando me vengo al instituto me dan, para comer, y yo hago mis tareas- así. Yo ahorita, mis padres, yo quiero que me dan animo. Voy estudiar y que mandan cosas lo que yo quiero, lo que quieres. Están bien, mis padres que están alli.

They encourage me because when they are over there, when they send us our things, we are able to be content because my grandparents are caring for us, and my aunt, and when I go to school they give me money to buy food, and I do my work- it’s like this. I, now, my parents, I love them for encouraging me. I am going to school and they are sending me the things I like. My parents are great, my parents who are over there [in the U.S].
Ben’s interview was dominated by the words of praise he has for his parents because of all of the remittances they send him. Ben also appeared to be genuinely content when discussing his parents. Despite his apparent contentment, Ben also talked about experiencing sadness and the reality of missing his parents from time-to-time. As is presented in the next section on consejos, he described some of the losses he experiences from the physical absence of both of his parents. Nonetheless, when asked if he would prefer his parents to return to Guatemala or remain in the U.S., Ben said: “Lo que yo prefiero es que mi papa, que ya esta allí, que nos mandan ropa y nos ayuda que mandar nuestras gastos, y así, yo prefiero que están allí porque nos mandan dinero aquí y no hay mas pisto.” “What I prefer is that my father, who is over there, who sends us clothes and helps us and sends money for our expenses, I prefer that they stay there because they send money here and there’s not much money here.”

Like Ben, 17-year old Leopold (Family 7) spoke unequivocally about the important role remittances played in his life in Guatemala and in his transnational relationship with his father. Leopold explained that remittances were often the subject of his cross-border communication with his father. Leopold also admitted that remittances were sometimes a source of contention between him and his father. When discussing the role remittances play in their relationship, Leopold explained:

El manda como cada mes. Lo que es necesario- dinero para alimentación, una poca de ropa, y eso es todo. A veces el dice que no es fácil ganar el dinero allá en los Estados y que a veces estamos gastando mucho dinero aquí y eso. Por eso- que mi papa dice que no es fácil ganar el dinero en los EEUU allí empezamos tener problemas porque nosotros necesitamos comprar cosas acá también, porque todos tenemos gastos también.

He sends every month. What is necessary- money for nutrition, a little bit of clothes, and that’s all. Sometimes he says it is not easy to earn money there in the
U.S. and that sometimes we are spending a lot of money here [in Guatemala]. For this reason- when my father says it’s not easy to earn in the U.S.- we begin to have problems because we need to buy things here in Guatemala too, all of us have our expenses.

While Leopold refers to remittances-related disagreements as “problems” between him and his father, Raquel, Leopold’s mother, revealed that Leopold constantly demands remittances from his father, which severely irritates and angers his father. According to Raquel: “A veces él se pone chillar también porque le dice a veces a su papa, ‘yo quiero molestarte, mándame… mándame zapatos,’ a veces él se enojó con él también.”

“Sometimes he makes his father scream because sometimes he tells his father, ‘I want to bother you, send me…send me shoes,’ and sometimes his father is angry at him also.”

From the narratives presented by Leopold and his mother Raquel, and Miguel in the previous section, it is clear that adolescents’ expectations of remittances from their U.S.-based parent(s) influence their behaviors in Guatemala and their transnational relationships. According to the director of Fe y Alegría in Zacualpa, the combination of absent parents and the flow of remittances from parents in the U.S. can lead to “una pérdida de valores en los muchachos,” “a loss of values in the young men.” It is possible that when the adolescents constantly request remittances from their parents, and even attempt to manipulate their parents into sending them remittances, they are demonstrating some of the negative consequences to which the director was referring. Even though the receiving of remittances can likely have both positive and negative consequences for families and communities in Zacualpa, it is clear from adolescents in this study that they view the remittances they receive from their parents as a sign that their parents are caring for and committed to them despite their parents’ physical absences.

Remittances from the perspectives of U.S.-based migrant parents. While parents
in the U.S. also note the emotional significance that remittances play in the lives of their children, they equally emphasize the financial strain and sacrifice they experience to support their children in Guatemala. When describing her main responsibilities as a transnational parent, for example, Julia (Family 1) notes: “Con todo de la familia nos son responsable, porque de aunque mandarle dinero a ellos mantenerlo y todo y más, más que lo que están aquí.” “We are responsible for the whole family, because we send money to them to take care of them and all, and it costs even more [considering our expenses] here.” Mauricio (Family 3) also commented that his presence in the lives of his children, wife, and mother in a village of Zacualpa is mostly a financial one. When explaining what he does to care for and maintain a tie to these family members in Guatemala, Mauricio notes

Bueno lo que yo está haciendo actualmente—por mis hijas especialmente y por mi mama y la mama de ellas también—es ayudarlas económicamente. Entonces este, actualmente tengo nacido un vida diferente a mi hija. Yo le mando dos mil dólares cada mes para poner en un banco, y allí ella está muy bien.”

What I am actually doing— for my daughters especially and for my mother and their mother also—is helping them economically. So through this, I have actually given my daughter another life. I send her two thousand dollars every month to put in the bank and over there she is doing very well.”

Daniela expressed a similar sentiment about how she supported her family in Guatemala, while describing the struggle she experiences to offer this support. Daniela explains:

Entonces mire que lo estoy pasando, que yo estoy sufrir. Estoy trabajando, y bien matado, ganando siete peso la hora y sin ganar bien pero así es la vida, tiene que seguir adelante. Sacar adelante mis hijos—ni quiero mis hijos se quedan sin estudio—y por eso estoy aquí en ese lugar aprovechando un poco para ganar un mejor futuro para mis niños.

So look at what I am experiencing, what I am suffering. I am working, and very hard, earning seven dollars an hour and without earning well but this is life, I have to continue moving forward. To move my children ahead—and I don’t want them to remain without an education—for this I am here in this place taking advantage
a little in order to earn for a better future for my children.

All U.S.-based migrant parents in this study noted the struggle of laboring in the U.S. to send remittances to their children and other loved ones in Guatemala. Marlon (Family 6) commented that he not only supports his children in Guatemala with his remittances but supports his father who suffered a stroke. He explained: “Yo todavía estoy mandando dinero para la medicina para el recuperar.” “I still am sending money for the medicine to help him recover.” Antonio (Family 8) noted that he remains in the U.S. to help an additional child of his in Guatemala, Mateo, “que ahora quiere estudiar también,” “who now also wants to study.” Similar statements are found across parent interviews.

**Remittances from the perspectives of Guatemala-based caregivers.** Caregivers in Guatemala had much to say about remittances from U.S.-based migrant parents. Across the sample, caregivers expressed both appreciating the efforts U.S.-based migrant parents made to send them remittances, and also their views that they were a necessary part of family functioning. Several caregivers, such as Paula (Family 1), noted that when parents sent them remittances, they, similar to the children in their care, also experienced contentment. Paula explained:

Me siento bien porque sus papas me mandan dinero, me mandan ropas a sus hijos y todo les mandan así para que ellos comen siempre lo que quieran y el dinero que mandan los papas le dicen que no les da a ellos porque ellos no saben que hace con esa dinero, entonces mejor yo aquí compré lo que ellos necesitan y me siento feliz porque así les mandan.

I am very happy because [my grandchildren’s] parents send me money, send me clothes for their children and everything they send like this for them to eat, always what they want and the money that the parents send, they tell me not to give it to them directly because they don’t know how to use this money, so it’s better for me here to buy the things they need. And I feel happy because they send money this way.
Caregivers in Guatemala also relayed their views that sending remittances was what U.S.-based migrant parents did to care for the children they left in Guatemala. In every participant family, caregivers in Guatemala described economic support as the way in which U.S.-based, undocumented migrant parents cared for children from afar.

When describing why her daughter, Julianna, migrated to the U.S. and what she does for her children in Guatemala, Veronica (Family 2), the grandmother of Yesenia and Jessica explained: “Ella se fué de Guatemala trabajar, a luchar por sus niñas. Porque quería mandar su pisto a sus hijas. La Julianna me manda ropas, zapatos, pisto para comer. La Juliana si siempre le manda para su hijas.” “She left Guatemala to work, to struggle for her children. Because she wanted to send her money to her children. Julianna sends me clothes, shoes, money to eat. Julianna always sends for her daughters.”

Similarly, Katy (Family 9), who cared for her granddaughter, M’caela, since she was three, explained that M’caela’s parents in the U.S. “me mandan cien dólares mensual por la M’caela,” “they send me one hundred dollars monthly for M’caela.”

Carlos (Family 4), the caregiver of his four younger siblings, also described the sending of remittances as one way in which his parents in the U.S. support him and his siblings. According to Carlos, remittances supply him and his siblings with their weekly sustenance and the ability to continue with their educations. When describing the arrangement he worked out with his parents related to caregiving and remittances, Carlos notes:

Yo los cuido y porque los padres nos mandan dinero para comprar cosas para comer. Yo en los días domingo voy a la mercado para comprar todo las cosas y los que hacen falta voy a la despensa y a traer todo y he preparado juntos a veces, lo hago yo a veces mi hermana a veces el otro todo así.

I care for them because my parents send us money in order to buy things and
food. I, on Sundays, go to the market in order to buy things, for whatever I can’t find at the market I go to the grocery store and bring back everything and prepare it, together sometimes, sometimes I make it or sometimes my sister makes the food or the others. It’s like this.

In addition to discussing the routines that revolve around remittances, some caregivers in Guatemala note that, despite U.S.-based migrant parents’ efforts, the remittances they send them do not always cover all the expenses family members incur in Guatemala. Sabina (Family 6) noted, for example, that: “Cuando Cristina no me manda por el gasto presta ese dinero, doscientos trescientos quetzales, y cuando ella manda el dinero entonces va pagar para que no las faltan nada los niños.” “When Cristina doesn’t send me [money] for the expenses, I borrow this money. Two hundred, three hundred quetzals ($39 USD), and when she sends me the money I pay off [the debt] so the children aren’t lacking anything.” Marina (Family 8) also discussed beginning her own business selling popsicles to supplement the income she received from her husband Antonio in the U.S. Mani (Family 5) works with his uncle as a carpenter to provide additional support for his siblings in Guatemala.

**Conclusion.** The data presented here elaborates on the role remittance exchanges play in transnational family relationships and transnational family life, and on some of the stresses created by remittances or when remittances from relatives in the U.S. are viewed as insufficient to meet the needs of Guatemala-based relatives, from the perspectives of caregivers in Guatemala. Some of the data also revealed how the engagement of Guatemala-based adolescents in remittance exchanges can lead adolescents to desire more money and goods from the U.S. These findings suggest that remittance exchanges can result in or influence positive and negative emotions and behaviors displayed by multiple members of transnational, mixed-status families, and
children in origin countries in particular.

While youth in Guatemala tend to respond emotionally and excitedly to receiving money and gifts in the mail, parents in the U.S. and caregivers in Guatemala view remittances as a vital part of family functioning. Even though remittances are viewed as necessary for the family’s survival and livelihood in Guatemala, caregivers and children in Guatemala still take the time to voice their appreciation for the remittances they receive from U.S.-based migrants, suggesting that not all U.S.-based migrants send regular remittances to their loved ones in origin nations (as research confirms, e.g., Castañeda, 2012).

All family members articulate that having the ability to provide financial support in the form of remittances to Guatemala-based relatives is the main motivation for parental migration to the U.S. Finally, U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers suggest that the reliance of Guatemala-based family members on remittances from the U.S is another force behind prolonged family separations.

**Consejos.** The narratives presented by differently positioned family members in this study refer to remittances and communication practices in addition to the presence of consejos in their transnational family relationships. While consejos were discussed as an aspect of cross-border family relationships throughout interviews, they were defined differently by different families and by different participants. From the various definitions provided, I broadly defined consejos as a form of “life advice” usually given to younger relatives within a family from older relatives. This is also commensurate with the definition of consejos in research with Latin American families in the U.S. (see Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valdér, 1996; López, 2001).


*Culturally appropriate definition of consejos.* To gain more information about the presence of consejos in Mayan family relationships, I discussed the use of the word consejos with several parents on the phone, and consulted with a colleague who is ethnically Maya and a native Guatemalan. The mothers with whom I communicated clarified that they offer consejos to their children during cross-border phone conversations, “pero nunca mandados” “but never demands.” They explained that this is because they are not physically present in their children’s lives and cannot observe how their children will respond to what they say on the phone. Parents seemed to believe that if they made demands of their children, or issued directives, they would not have any confidence that their children would follow these directives from afar, and they would have no way to discipline them for not following them.

When I shared this definition with my colleague he explained that he was at first surprised to learn that mothers gave consejos to their children because, in his mind and in his experience, consejos were almost always given by an elderly relative, such as a grandmother, aunt, uncle or even a family friend, but never by a parent. I explained that I believed mothers and parents in the U.S. offered consejos to their Guatemala-based children because they were physically absent and felt, for this reason, they could not “order” them to do things but had to rely on subtly guiding them to wield some influence on their behaviors and actions. He responded this way: “That makes sense. Consejos are an emotionally salient process so I can see how when parents are absent from their kids’ lives and trying to make up for being absent, giving consejos is the best they can do.” In describing additional aspects of consejos, he noted that unlike mandados, consejos involve a “dialectical process.” According to my colleague, “when consejos are used
within Mayan families and communities, they are typically passed down from an elder to a younger family member as a form of conventional wisdom that can either be followed or rejected. In contrast, mandados are often given by parents to their children, and if children don’t follow their parents’ mandados, they will be punished.”

Variation of consejos. In this research, consejos typically appeared in interviews as a form of guidance or wisdom that was being passed down from undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. to their children in Guatemala, or from caregivers in Guatemala to the children in their care. Consejos were always given by an older family member to a younger family member, but not necessarily from an elder. The types of consejos offered to young children seemed to vary from the types of consejos offered to young adults or adults. Despite this variation, across the sample consejos appeared to be an important family process that was valued by children, adolescents, and the parents in the U.S. who reportedly received them from the older generation in Guatemala (i.e., Julia receiving them from her mother Paula, see below). Consejos also appeared to be valuable when they were being passed down from a mother to her children or from a father to his children across borders.

The U.S.-based migrant parents in this study described utilizing the strategy of consejos from afar when they were trying to be present and have some say in their Guatemala-based children’s lives. Consejos also appeared to be an important factor in the relationship between Guatemala-based caregivers and Guatemala-based children, although less data was presented on this exchange. As U.S.-based parents in this study noted, sometimes their Guatemala-based children were resistant to consejos from the caregivers in their proximal environments, especially if their caregivers are elderly and
from a different generation. Despite some adolescents in this study appearing to be resistant to consejos from the adults in their lives, the findings from this study suggest that consejos are still integral to the relationships they maintain with U.S.-based parents and Guatemala-based caregivers. Parents in the U.S. additionally define the physically distant roles they play in their children’s lives in terms of the communication they initiate and the consejos they try to impart to their children.

**Consejos in transnational parents-child relationships.** Consejos appear to be a particularly salient aspect of the mother-child relationship across families in this study. Consejos between transnational mothers and children in Guatemala appear frequently in the narratives of family members in Carlos’s family (Family 4). As Carlos explained in our first interview in February 2011, he was only able to take on the role of caregiver at age 15 because his mother prepared him and advised him sufficiently. Carlos recalled:

> Si, dice “yo irme” mi mama porque, bueno, tenía un desear comprar una casa y bueno se fué mi mama y entonces yo me encargada totalmente de mis hermanos. Yo tenía quince años cuando ella se fué. Quince años. Pues es, como se llama, antes de irse mi mama nos dejo los consejos que necesitamos practicar, como yo y que nos tenemos que actuar aquí.

So my mother said “I am going to leave” because, well, she had the desire to buy a house and so she went and I was totally in charge of my siblings. I was 15 when she went. But before leaving my mother left me with the life advice that we need to practice, how I ,we, need to act here.

Similarly in February 2012, during a follow-up interview, Carlos explained that his four siblings do behave badly at times but consejos from their mother, Lola, in the U.S. mitigate the challenges Carlos experiences when trying to reprimand and care for his siblings in Guatemala. According to Carlos, when his siblings misbehave or when he and his siblings experience other issues in their Guatemala-based household, he talks to his mother in the U.S. and she speaks to his siblings, and “los acceptan sus ideas y los
consejos y aplican también,” “they accept her ideas and the life advice she offers and apply them well.” Here the dialectical aspect of consejos is emphasized as Carlos explains that his siblings choose to “accept and apply” their mother’s advice, suggesting his siblings could just as well refuse it.

It’s also clear that while Carlos is “totally in charge” of his siblings, their mother still tries to parent from afar and support his caregiving efforts. In an interview with Lola in spring 2011, she also noted that despite her presence in the U.S. for five years, her children continue to look to her for approval. Lola said: “Ellos me piden permiso cualquier cosa, me llaman las da permiso.” “They ask me for permission for any such thing, they call me and I give them permission.” The data presented here suggests that not only communication but consejos as well are a strategy through which some parents support and wield influence over their children despite families’ experiences of separation over time.

Julia (Family 1) also suggested that the process of a mother giving consejos to her children across borders is a valuable aspect of transnational family relationships and can provide a significant source of support to children. Julia is in her 30s, and has four children of her own. She explained that while she often gives consejos to her two children in Guatemala, when communicating with her mother, Paula, who she has not seen in nearly a decade, she also receives a lot of advice. Julia explained: “Ella me dice, me da mucho consejo mi mama, cuando yo le cuento cosas lo que me pasa, lo que siento, entonces ella me da consejos me dice ‘lo que vas hacer ahora.’” “She tells me, she gives me a lot of life advice, my mother, when I tell her things that happened to me, how I feel, and she gives me a lot of life advice, tells me ‘what you are going to do now.’”
In the initial interview with Jessica (Family 2) in Guatemala in summer 2010, she also noted how the consejos from her transnational mother were valuable and distinct from the consejos she receives from her Guatemala-based caregivers, her grandparents. According to Jessica, “Si lo le cuento las cosas me que me molestan a mi abuela, mi abuela no me comprende y mi mama si. Mi abuelita, yo le explico las cosas, así me dice ‘no me entiende’, me prefiere la decisión de mi mama,” “If I discuss the things that are bothering me with my grandmother, she doesn’t understand me, but my mother does. My grandmother, I explain to her these things, she tells me ‘I don’t understand,’ I prefer the decision of my mother.” Similarly, when summarizing what her mother did to care for her from the U.S., Jessica noted: “Lo que hace es darnos consejos, manda dinero, y llama a casa cada semana,” “What she does is give us life advice, send money, and call the house every week.”

Jessica, as described above, maintained transnational communication with and received consejos across borders from her mother. Because Jessica’s father reportedly abandoned the family when Jessica’s little sister Yesenia was born, her father was absent from her life and not a part of the communication or consejos processes in which Jessica engaged. However, seven of the other eight participant families included fathers in the U.S. with whom their children in Guatemala communicated. The migrant fathers in these families were also utilizing strategies to maintain ties with their children in Guatemala. According to transnational father Cesar, (Family 7), to care for his children through the phone, and especially his oldest, Leopold, he offers consejos. He described these consejos in this way:

Yo digo que no dejan en la escuela. Sigue en la escuela. Mientras que yo puedo, yo les voy [apoyar] ellos que siguen estudiando. A veces el no quiere pero dije
por que? Así, me paso a mi, no es fácil, es muy duro para mi. Le digo yo, estudio estudio, busca tu esposa, son iguales, esa tiempo tienen buen estudios. Los dos les hace fácil para vivir le digo yo. Y todo eso, es así.

I say do not leave school. Continue with your studies. While I am able, I am going to continue [to support them] so they can continue studying. Sometimes he [Leopold] doesn’t want to but I say why? Like me, what happened to me, [to be lacking an education] it’s not easy, it’s very hard for me. For this I say study study, [in the future] you can look for your wife, you can be equals, in this time period, you can be well educated the two of you. It will be easier to live, I say. And all of this this, it’s like this.

During a February 2012 visit to Guatemala, Leopold confirmed that he had graduated from high school and was continuing with his university studies, following his father’s consejos. In this example from Cesar and Leopold, it is clear that with consejos, Cesar advises Leopold to make good decisions, decisions Cesar believes will significantly influence his life. Because Cesar grew up without an education, he believes he knows the difference an education can make in one’s life. He draws from his own life experience to guide his child’s actions, despite Cesar living in the U.S. for over a decade, while Leopold and his other two sons have grown up in Guatemala.

Similar to Cesar, Antonio (Family 8), and Miguel, (Family 1) discuss the consejos they offer their children on the phone. Antonio said, “A veces los niños peleó, así mismo este hermana con el hermano, y hay que…a veces hacen cosas malas a la mamá. Pues tienen que hacer lo que la mama dice, le digo yo,” “Sometimes the children fight like this, this sister with her brother, and sometimes they are bad to their mother. So I tell them they have to do what the mother says.” Antonio’s daughter Marianna also noted that her father “el dijo que este… sigue estudiando, sigue adelante, y con tu mamá me dijo [hace que ella] dijo mi papa y eso, hablamos así,” “He says continue studying, continue moving forward, and with your mother, do what she says. My father tells me this, like
this we talk.” While the consejos Marianna describes seem closer to directives than the other examples provided, the same intent that was present in Lola and Cesar’s use of consejos, of parents trying to wield some influence over their children’s behaviors and keep the peace in some way, comes out here. It’s also clear that Antonio, like Cesar, uses consejos to encourage his children to study and move ahead.

While transnational father Miguel imparts similar consejos to his children in Guatemala, he and his wife Julia stated that they realized that because they are far away they can try to give their children advice but they cannot make demands (mandados) of them because they are not there to “regañar” “to punish” or discipline their children if they don’t listen to them. With this explanation, the limited power that U.S.-based parents have over their children’s actions and behaviors comes to the fore. Marlon (Family 6) admitted to this in his interview as well, noting that he also tries to advise his children, Saira and Julio, from the U.S. but that his children do not respond well to this parenting effort. He offered this example of the difficulties he encounters when trying to maintain a tie to his children:

Si, algo duro porque a veces iba platicar con ellos, trato a darlos consejos- porque la abuela me dice que son rebeldes—y yo trato darle consejos a ellos, pero ellos a veces hacen caso, cuando empiezo yo con ellos “que no hagan [cosas malas], que respetan su abuelo, y trabajan, y hace algo ayudar su abuelo porque hay muchos vicios allá,” y se enojan conmigo y a veces dejan el teléfono tirado y no me escuchan.”

Yes, it is difficult. Sometimes I try to chat with them, I try to give them some life advice—because the grandmother told me they are rebellious—so I try to give them this guidance, but in these cases, when I begin advising them that they “should not disrespect their grandfather and they should work hard and help their grandfather because there are many vices over there,” they get angry with me and sometimes they throw the phone, they don’t listen.
Consejos between Guatemala-based caregivers and adolescents. The experience described by Marlon and corroborated by his mother-in-law, Sabina, was the strongest example across the sample of an adolescent in Guatemala rejecting efforts made by his or her undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. to be present in their children’s lives through communication and offering life advice. It also suggests that despite some parents’ claims that they only give consejos and not directives on the phone, children in Guatemala may not perceive a strong distinction between the two. Additionally, while some parents (and my Guatemalan colleague) may view giving consejos to their children in Guatemala as a way that they show their affective ties to their children from whom they have been physically separated, the interviews suggest that children in Guatemala may not appreciate this effort or interpret it in the same way.

As mentioned in the earlier section, Sabina believes her grandson Julio’s behaviors and his outright rejection of his parents’ efforts to communicate with him and give him consejos are connected to the anger he feels towards his parents for leaving him in Guatemala at a young age. While the cause of his anger may be his parents’ migration, Sabina also explained that Julio is “muy rebelde,” “very rebellious,” to her as well. According to Sabina, Julio often rejects her consejos, and when she attempts to discipline him and “tratar pegar él, él me pegó,” “and to try to physically discipline him, he hits [her].” With this additional example, it becomes clear that this family is experiencing moments of tension in their transnational relationships and in the relationship between the Guatemala-based adolescents and caregivers.

Interviews with members of other transnational families also suggest that adolescents in other participant families display similar rebellious attitudes at times.
Deborah, for example, expressed to her mother Julia, that she is “aburrida,” “bored,” of the consejos from her grandmother. According to Julia, Deborah’s grandmother and caregiver: “le da consejos con tanta frecuencia que le aburre, y la abuela es mucho mayor, hay un gran diferencia de edad y ella es de un generación diferente. A veces esto crea problemas entre los dos,” “she gives her consejos so frequently that they bore her. The grandmother is so much older, there is a big age difference and she is from a different generation. Sometimes this creates problems between them.”

From these examples of Julio and Deborah, it is evident that the migration of one’s parents can have consequences on the relationships between family members in a transnational, mixed-status family, despite U.S.-based parents’ attempts to maintain ties across borders and a presence in their children’s lives. There are also tensions in the relationships between alternative caregivers and the children in their care, which surface through examples of children rejecting the consejos from caregivers in Guatemala. Important to note, however, is that in most cases, youth reported that the consejos offered from their Guatemala-based caregivers were valuable to them. Ruben (Family 5), for example, described the caregiving efforts of his older brother Mani, in this way: “El asiste reuniones a la escuela, el va todas las reuniones y nos da consejos también,” “He attends all the meetings at school, he goes to all of the meetings, and he gives us life advice as well. Yesenia also confirmed that she receives many consejos from her grandparents (Veronica and Teodor), and from teachers as well. And similarly, Carlos (Family 4) explained that for the siblings in his care, he tries his best to advise them, despite his lack of experience:

Yo trato cumplir los dos funciones de una mamá y una papá pero tengo esa experiencia. Yo soy un hermano a ellos no papá y pues no tengo la experiencia de
Cómo solucionar sus problemas. [Pero digo a ellos] Bueno cada uno tiene sus sueños y lo tiene que vivir lo digo yo. Si tienes su sueño yo lo voy apoyar un sueño...tener que estudiar y poner un buen ejemplo a la sociedad

I try to complete the two functions of a mother and a father but I don’t have this experience. I am a brother to them, not a father, so I don’t have this experience of solving their problems. But I say [to them] everyone has their dreams to live by. If you have your dreams I will help you reach your dreams. You have to study and be a good example for society...

From Carlos’s narrative, it’s apparent that Guatemala-based caregivers, including grandparents and older siblings, also utilize the strategy of giving consejos, even when they feel ill-equipped to do so. Carlos also revealed that while he receives consejos from his parents on the phone, and offers consejos to his siblings when he can, he, like the other youth in this study, define the absence of his parents in terms of a lack of consejos in their day-to-day lives. Carlos, when describing what his father’s absence has meant to him noted: “Bueno a veces, porque uno puede recordar, cuando mi papa estaba aquí y fuimos ir a jugar y fíjate cuando el se fue ya no es que ya no nadie te habla nadie que darte consejos digo,” “Well sometimes, because one can remember, when my father was here, we would go play, and [now] you notice that he is gone already, that there is no one to talk to, no one from whom to receive consejos.” Ben also noted that while he maintains communication with his parents on the phone and receives consejos from his mother, such as “te cuidas, no moleste sus compañeros,” “take care, do not brother your friends,” he also feels a significant loss in his life from growing up without the physical presence of his parents. Ben explained that because his parents migrated when he was two and have remained in the U.S. since, “No han enseñanda nada y mi mamá no hacen nada nada porque no están aquí porque no nos dan consejos,” “They have not taught me anything, and my mother hasn’t done anything [for me], nothing, because they aren’t here because
they don’t give us life advice.” Here Ben also suggests that consejos have an educative purpose, just as research with Latino parents in the U.S. reports (see, Valdes & Lopez, 2006).

The variety of incidents reviewed here, where consejos were present in transnational family relationships, demonstrate that consejos, in some form, is viewed as an important parenting strategy by both U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers. From the adolescents in this study, it was also clear that both fathers and mothers in the U.S. attempted to offer consejos to them despite the family separations they had experienced for many years. Consejos from parents in the U.S. often served to guide their adolescents in Guatemala, especially when their adolescents were in charge of their own siblings and, at times, overwhelmed with their caregiving duties. While some parents were careful to offer consejos and not mandados to their children, over whom they knew they had little control, parents could not be assured that their adolescents would appreciate or respect their consejos. Similarly, when Guatemala-based caregivers, including mothers, grandmothers, and brothers try to steer the children in their care in the right direction through providing meaningful life advice, developmental factors and other contextual strains seems to influence these exchanges.

**Conclusion.** The findings show that even though offering consejos from the U.S. yields mixed results in migrant parents’ relationships with their children in Guatemala, both migrant parents in the U.S. and adolescents in Guatemala view these processes as important to their relationships. Consejos are also important parts of the proximal relationships in Guatemala in which adolescents in this study and their caregivers are involved. While some adolescents reject the consejos from their parents and/or
caregivers, it’s possible that an absence of consejos altogether in transnational and proximal relationships would be indicative of a more significant “perdida de valores,” “loss of values,” or of family ruptures in transnational families. Similarly, earlier sections revealed that while the strategies of communication and remittance sending are fraught with tension and viewed differently by different members of transnational, mixed-status families, taken together they appear to enable U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based adolescents and caregivers to maintain connections across borders and be present in each others’ lives.

III. Strains to Transnational Family Relationships

The findings from this study show that, while each participant family strived to maintain relationships across space and over time, they were experiencing strains on their family relationships and on their attempts to utilize the transnational family strategies of communication, remittances, and consejos. The analysis of data in this study showed that strains experienced within family relationships, and to transnational, mixed-status families as a whole, are related to multiple aspects of the context in Guatemala and U.S., as well as to the individuals developing in and interacting with these contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Figure 1 includes representations of the main categories of strains and how they influence transnational, mixed-status families during separation experiences.

The main strains (i.e., sub-categories) affecting relationships between, primarily, undocumented U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based adolescents, and Guatemala-based caregivers that were identified and classified through the grounded theory analysis of data include:
1. Individual and interpersonal developmental changes;
2. Factors of the U.S. sociopolitical and socio-legal climate;
3. Socioeconomic stressors in Guatemala and in the U.S.;

Because families interact with the different factors in their transnational contexts that are the sources of strains on their relationships, they also necessarily exert influence on these different factors. These factors are depicted in Figure 1 and defined further in the succeeding sub-sections and in the context of the data provided by participant families.

Because some of the strains to transnational relationships and the utilization of core strategies were discussed in the previous section when examples of each strategy were presented, this section refers to previous examples where appropriate. It also provides new examples of how the strains not yet discussed influence transnational, mixed-status relationships over time, and family members’ experiences with communication, remittances, and consejos.

One of the main factors or strains that will be reviewed in this section is individual and interpersonal developmental changes. These changes occur over time and as family separation experiences are prolonged. In this section, some of the strained interactions between adolescent children in Guatemala and their U.S.-based migrant parents, described in previous sections, will be highlighted and some of the possible explanations for these strained interactions will be mentioned. Also in this section and (throughout the succeeding sections), the experiences of several families who utilized the additional strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family (Figure 2) will be reviewed in relation to how the use of this strategy may be connected to individual and interpersonal developmental changes, including, in relationships between transnational
siblings. As described below, use of this strategy illustrates how migrants and their families are not simply affected by the contexts in which they are living but affect those contexts as well, with significant consequences for their families and the relationships engaged within families.

The other two main types of strains identified in this study, socioeconomic and socio-legal, are related to aspects of the transnational context across the U.S. and Guatemala in which family members live and in which their relationships take place. Socioeconomic strains, for example, refer to socioeconomic factors in the U.S. and Guatemala that participants discussed as both impelling migration and also straining transnational family relationships in different ways. Socio-legal strains included incidences participants discussed in interviews that were related to the undocumented status of migrant relatives in the U.S., and the immigration and deportation policies and practices they encountered. These socio-legal strains were frequently described in relation to why families experience prolonged family separations. These main categories of strains are depicted in Figure 1.

As will be discussed in this section, employment issues also came up in interviews as an important aspect of life for undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. that can also strain or enhance transnational, mixed-status family relationships and the utilization of strategies therein. Specifically, the ability of migrant relatives to find “trabajo fijo,” “steady work” in the U.S. is mentioned throughout interviews as a factor that influences transnational, mixed-status families. Because this factor is part of the U.S. sociopolitical and socio-legal climate and is strongly related to socioeconomic conditions in Guatemala and the U.S., it is not represented separately in Figure 1. The importance of
understanding the role of work and work-related issues in the lives and relationships of the transnational, mixed-status families in this study cannot be overstated, as is illustrated in this section.

**Individual and interpersonal developmental changes.** The perspectives reported by and about adolescents in this study suggest that individual changes, such as those that accompany developmental transitions from childhood to adolescence, may be straining relationships between adolescents and their U.S.-based migrant parents and between adolescents and their Guatemala-based caregivers. These findings are supported by research in developmental psychology, which has shown that during adolescence youth develop resistance to authority figures and seek independence from their parents, which can sometimes increase conflict in relationships between children and their parents (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). In addition to developmental changes related to adolescence, there is some evidence in this study that characteristics of caregivers in Guatemala and characteristics of migrant parents in the U.S. may be influencing their adolescents’ behavior, and thus, the relationships within the families.

If the behaviors of adolescents in this study are influenced by aspects of their relationships with caregivers in Guatemala, as well as by their relationships with parents in the U.S. with whom they interact through cross-border processes, the observable developmental changes within adolescent participants may be better explained by interpersonal relational factors (Cook, 2001). These interpersonal and relational factors may reflect the “fit” of the relationships between adolescents in Guatemala and their parents in the U.S., or between adolescents and their caregivers based in Guatemala, as well as the resultant relationship- and family-level conflicts (Cook, 2001; Lerner, 1993).
Specifically, adolescents in Guatemala may be evoking parenting behaviors from their parents through the ways in which they engage in or disengage from cross-border processes, and/or parents in the U.S. may be evoking behaviors from their Guatemala-based adolescents that clash with their expectations of their adolescents (Lerner, 1993). It is plausible that because parents are living in the U.S. for prolonged periods of time, while their children are growing up in Guatemala without them, their children develop personalities and individual characteristics about which their parents only have limited information, and thus, limited knowledge about how best to respond to or interact with their adolescents through cross-border family processes.

It was not possible to identify the direction of influence in relationships explored in this qualitative study, and, specifically, to determine which family member evoked which reactions or behaviors in his or her transnational, mixed-status family relationships. Because developmental psychology suggests that behaviors, experiences, and interactions within relationships are influenced by the characteristics of the multiple members engaged in them (Lerner, 1993), a likely interpretation of findings is that the strains in relationships previously described are connected to the ways in which U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers are responding to their adolescent children. In particular, descriptions of Julio’s rebellious behaviors, Ben’s disinterest in communicating on the phone, and Deborah’s impatience with consejos from her grandmother, may be better explained by interpersonal influences than by theories that emphasize the storm and stress experienced and acted out during adolescence.

**Exemplifying interpersonal influences.** To understand the role of development and time in the transnational, mixed-status families and the role of interpersonal
influences in transnational, mixed-status families, it is important to consider characteristics of the adolescents in this study, of their caregivers, and of their parents, as each of these family members is involved cross-border relationships and in maintaining the equilibrium of their complicated family systems. The findings from this study suggest that when children are developing under the care of their grandparents in Guatemala (as was the case with Deborah, Ben, Yesenia, Jessica, Julio, Saira, and M’caela), the tensions experienced in their caregiver-child relationships become more pronounced over time as both the grandchildren and grandparents age. Informants from Zacualpa also suggested that this was the case. They reported that when children are left behind in Guatemala with grandparents when their parents migrate, there is often a lack of discipline and that this lack of discipline becomes problematic as children approach adolescence and are in need of both nurturance and discipline. It’s possible that when grandparents are in charge, they do not give their grandchildren the “mandados” “directives” that parents give children to ensure they behave well.

Teachers from Fe y Alegría shared the observations that the lack of discipline in families headed by grandparents becomes a significant problem when these children enter high school and begin developmentally maturing. One teacher explained that because of this lack of discipline in the home, the students “necesitan mas acompañamiento y mayor apoyo que otros estudiantes que tienen a sus papas acá,” “they need more accompaniment and more support than other students that have their parents here,” and the teachers at the school struggle to provide it. Research with youth in other transnational families and countries in the global south has supported the finding that adolescents in origin countries need discipline and often crave the discipline they are not receiving because of their
parents’ physical absences (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Foner & Dreby, 2011). This is one example of how there may be a challenging “fit” in the relationship between grandparents and the adolescent grandchildren in their care. It also suggests that individuals who are outside of the family, such as teachers, adjust their roles in these adolescents’ lives to confront some of the strains related to family separations.

The grandparent caregivers in this sample corroborated this account from teachers in Zacualpa, explaining that they intentionally engage in a more relaxed style of caregiving with their grandchildren than they did with their own children. Several admitted that this was because they did not feel they had the right to physically reprimand grandchildren. Paula (Family 1) for example, explained “la mamá de ellos estaba muy enojada pero yo nunca en mi vida he pegado a mis nietos,” “Their mother was often very angry but I never in my life hit my grandchildren.” Here, it becomes clear that the difference in parenting styles between Paula and her daughter, Julia, may also be influencing some of the behaviors in Paula’s grandchildren and the moments of tension in their relationships. While other grandparents, such as Sabina (Family 6), reported engaging in corporal punishment, they suggested that they too struggle to care for the children despite the discipline they enact in their relationships.

U.S.-based migrants also reflected on how developmental changes and the role of time can influence relationships between their Guatemala-based children and the caregivers they elected for them. For example, Lola discussed how her youngest child in Guatemala, 11-year old Daniel, worried that because his caregiver and brother, Carlos, was a young man, that soon he might want to find his own family and leave his siblings who he had been caring for since their parents migrated. According to Lola, “cuando yo
le hablan por teléfono me dice, ‘Carlos tal vez va conseguir mujer tal vez va ponga mujer, yo me quedo solo entonces,’ el quiere que yo me regrese por Guatemala,” “when I speak with them on the phone he tells me, ‘Carlos is going to find a partner and when he finds her, I am going to be alone.’ So he wants me to return to Guatemala.” This is an example of how developmental changes in Guatemala-based caregivers and the children they look after can influence the conversations, and potentially, the relationships between U.S.-based migrant parents and their children in Guatemala.

In addition to concerns related to developmental changes in sibling caregivers, U.S.-based migrant parents voiced concerns related to the aging of their parents’ generation. Cristina, for example (Family 6) explained: “Yo lo extraño mi mamá. ¿Como estaría mi mama como están allá? Cuando ella me vine no esta así mi mama, joven todavía. Pero ahora ya se esta poniendo mas viejita allá,” “I miss my mother. How is she over there, how will she be in the future? When I left her she wasn’t like this, my mother was still very young but now she is a lot older.”

During my visit to Guatemala in February 2012, I too observed that Cristina’s mother, and the grandparents in Families 1 and 2, were very ill and physically weakened. During phone conversations in March 2012, Cristina expressed “estoy preocupada, mi mamá esta muy enferma, ¿que va a pasar?” “I am worried, my mother is very ill, what is going to happen?”

Julia (Family 1) also discussed how life-course changes were affecting her family in Guatemala, and her concerns for them from the U.S. Both of Julia’s parents were caring for her two children in Guatemala until 2008. In 2008, Julia’s father passed away and this has affected her children in a number of ways. Julia explained: “Mis dos hijos
me dicen, ‘yo ahora no voy estar aquí porque ahora tengo miedo que mi abuelo murió sola con mi abuelita, yo no voy a quedar aquí, yo voy allí,’” “My two children said ‘I am not going to stay here because now I am afraid. My grandfather died, I am not going to stay here now alone with my grandmother, I’m going there [to the U.S.]’” From this excerpt it is clear that the death of a caregiver in Guatemala influenced Guatemala-based adolescents’ day-to-day experiences in Guatemala, their feelings about their parents and their parents’ physical absences, and their own stated life plans to migrate north.

While Julia reported that both her children wanted to join her and Miguel in the U.S. in 2008, in February 2012, Julia’s mother, Paula explained in a follow-up interview, that the children are again resistant to the idea of migration. Paula explained that now that her grandchildren will have the opportunity to travel “legally” to the U.S. because of their mother’s asylum status, they prefer to stay in Guatemala. Paula said: “Los niños ahora están diciendo que no quieren irse, que quieren terminar sus estudios aca, pero les dije que esto no es un juego, que su mamá estaba luchando duro para arreglar sus papeles, para llevarlos a los Estados Unidos, que tienen que irse cuando pueden.” “The children now are saying they don’t want to go, that they want to finish their studies in Guatemala, but I told them this is not a game, that their mother has struggled hard for her papers so that she could bring them to the United States and they have to go.”

Paula’s narrative and those of other Guatemala-based caregivers reflect that while interpersonal influences in relationships are substantial and reverberate in the transnational-family system, adolescents in participant families are like adolescents all over the world: indecisive and, at times, inclined to challenge authority (Steinberg &
Morris, 2001). Carlos also explained that his three teenage siblings can be difficult to care for as each “tiene su propias ideas,” “has his own ideas.”

The adolescents in this study have voiced their own ideas and feelings about their transnational family and the family’s experience of migration. They have done so through engaging in communication processes with their U.S.-based migrant parents, and by rejecting their phone calls and efforts to communicate when “no tienen ganas de hablar,” “when they aren’t in the mood to talk.” They have also refused to receive consejos from their Guatemala-based caregivers. Their U.S.-based parents and Guatemala-based caregivers have responded to their children and their children’s behaviors in different ways, with different consequences for their relationships and the functioning of their families.

Some U.S.-based parents, such as Marlon (Family 6) and Julia (Family 1) have learned that when their adolescents are not interested in communicating or receiving their consejos through the phone, there is little U.S.-based migrant parents can do to change their children’s behaviors. It is unclear how this knowledge has influenced migrant parents’ attempts to communicate with their children or offer them consejos, beyond several parents claiming they know to not offer directives to their children over the phone. It’s possible that U.S.-based migrant parents are emotionally affected, and in significant ways, by their children’s rejections of their parenting efforts from afar, but these feelings were infrequently reported by participating parents.

In addition to straining communication and consejos processes, it seems that characteristics related to adolescent development influence the ways in which adolescents in Guatemala engage in remittance processes. As Miguel (Family 1) reported, his
Children, Deborah and Ben, have recently learned how to manipulate their U.S.-based parents into sending them more money than they actually need for school. Miguel has responded by changing the terms of his relationship with his mother-in-law, and asking her to verify how much money Ben and Deborah actually need when they make remittance demands of him. As Raquel and Cesar explained (Family 7), their 17-year-old son Leopold has increasingly demanded larger remittances from Cesar in the U.S. through the phone, straining their communication network and relationship at times. According to Raquel and Leopold, Cesar responds angrily to Leopold’s demands and seeming naivety about the cost of living in the U.S. It seems that as Cesar gets angry, Leopold feels more determined “to annoy” his father, and then Cesar and Leopold encounter “problemas,” “problems,” in their transnational, father-son relationship.

*Reconfiguring the transnational family and developmental changes.* Finally, in addition to leveraging their own power as adolescents to challenge the authority of their caregivers or influence the transnational family processes in which they are engaged, adolescents in this study were actively seeking more independence and adventure as they were growing up. Specifically, Leopold, Leisy, and Nina all voiced a strong desire to visit “y conocer,” “and get to know,” the U.S. At different points in this dissertation process, Deborah, Ben, Jessica, and M’caela also voiced their plans to migrate to be with their parent(s) in the U.S. As data collection for this study came to a close, Nina, Jessica, and M’caela had migrated to the U.S. Nina migrated against her Guatemala-based mother’s wishes. With teary eyes and an infectious sadness, Nina’s mother Maria explained in February, 2012: “Ella quería irse a los EE.UU., a ver los EE.UU., ver su papá. Yo le dije no te vas, que tiene que terminar sus estudios, pero ella no entendió,” “She, [Nina],
wanted to go to the U.S. to see the U.S. and see her father. I told her don’t go, you need to finish your studies, but she didn’t understand.”

In February 2011, during a visit to Guatemala, Nina asked me about the visa solicitation process. I assisted Nina in acquiring the information she needed to “legally” apply for a visa to go to the U.S. In August of 2011, I learned from Nina’s father, Mauricio, that Nina had crossed the border “illegally” and was picked up by ICE and sent to a youth center in Arizona. Mauricio had contact with Nina and was able to facilitate a three-way call between him, Nina, and me. When communicating on the phone in August, 2011, Nina said: “Estoy bien. Aprendiendo inglés, matemática. Mi papa esta visitándome aquí. En pronto podría salir de aquí y estar con mis familiares!” “I am good. I am learning English, Math. My father has visited me here. Soon I will be able to leave and be with my relatives!”

While expressing her excitement about making the journey to the U.S., Nina also revealed that she had been personally planning her migration with the support of her U.S.-based relatives several months prior to her arrival in the U.S. In comparison to Nina, 15-year old Jessica (Family 3) and 12-year old M’caela (Family 9) migrated as undocumented and unaccompanied youth because their U.S.-based migrant parents told them to and arranged the trip. While Jessica and M’caela expressed desires to migrate to the U.S. when I interviewed them in Guatemala, there was no indication that they would make the trip if their Guatemala-based caregivers disapproved. In February, 2011, M’caela’s grandmother and caregiver of nine years, Katy, explained her support for the migration of her granddaughter to the U.S., saying: “Sus padres le mandaron porque no pudieron mantener a ella de los EE.UU. Ellos saben que si va ir ahora, va estar más
seguro, mas fácil que ella tendría diez y quince años, debería peligrosa. Y soy vieja, que
va pasar si algo pasar conmigo?” “Her parents sent for her because they could no
longer maintain her from the U.S. They also knew she would have an easier and safer
time making it in to the U.S. because she was so young, that it would be dangerous for
her to go as a teenager of 15 years. And I am getting older, what would happen to
M’caela if something happened to me?” Jessica similarly explained in an interview in
2010, before migrating to the U.S., “mi mamá me dice que yo vaya con ella, no sé como
es el camino pero mi mama dice que este mes Noviembre parece que mi mamá a mi me
va a llevar con ella llevar con ella….y mi mamá va averiguar como esta el camino,” “my
mother told me that I am going with her. I don’t know what the route is like but my mom
said this month, November, it seems my mother is going to bring me to the U.S…and my
mother will find out what the journey is like.”

Strains in sibling relationships. Since arriving in the U.S., Jessica and M’caela
communicated that they are both overwhelmed and happy to be in the U.S. and with their
parent(s), despite missing their grandparent(s) who remain in Guatemala. Both Jessica
and M’caela also noted that it is difficult to adjust to their new lives with their “new”
U.S.-based siblings. Jessica and M’caela, and their relatives, shared reflections about the
sibling relationships in their families that provided a glimpse into some the challenges
and strains experienced by siblings in transnational families, especially after Guatemala-
based children migrate to be reunited with parents in the U.S.

During my visit with Jessica and her family in the U.S. in March 2011, Jessica,
greeted me at the door, dressed clad in blue jeans and a yellow polo shirt. She was also
holding her baby half-sister while her mother, Julianna was cooking. After chatting for a
while about Jessica’s journey the U.S., I was surprised to hear from Jessica—a teen who appeared to be very kind and never conveyed a negative emotion about anything or anyone during our previous interview in July 2010, or during the workshop at Fe y Alegría in July 2010—that while she likes helping out with her baby sister, she had only lukewarm feelings toward her six-year old sister. She whispered, during the visit, that her new relationship with her sister in the U.S. “es muy diferente que la relación que tengo con Yesenia,” “is very different than the relationship I have with Yesenia.” She also noted that her experiences in the U.S. and with her “new” father and sisters were different than she had anticipated. I told Jessica that this was to be expected, as she had grown up apart from her sisters in the U.S. and with her sister Yesenia, who was only three years younger than Jessica. Jessica shrugged as she was thinking about my comment. Soon after her mother came over to join us, at which point Jessica changed the subject entirely.

Similarly, during a phone conversation in April, 2012, Sabino (Family 9), M’caela’s father informed me that while his daughter M’caela was “50% acustombrado,” “50% adjusted,” to her new life in the U.S. and with her two younger siblings, these siblings seemed to annoy M’caela with all the “bulla,” “ruckus,” they created, and he and his wife Laura were trying to explain to M’caela’s siblings that they have to try and behave better around her and adjust to her new presence in their lives.

The tensions experienced in their sibling relationships for M’caela and Jessica have been reported in research with other youth in transnational families, and particularly by those who migrated to the U.S. as adolescents to join parents and their U.S.-born citizen siblings (Artico, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). The research shows that some of these tensions have to do with migrant adolescents feeling as if they have to vie for the
affection and attention of parents once in the U.S., while also competing with younger siblings who may have U.S. citizenship and other privileges which the adolescents are without (Foner & Dreby, 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009).

While Nina also migrated to the U.S. to reunite with her relatives, she was not going to be meeting her siblings for the first time as her only sibling, Olivia, was in Guatemala, with Nina’s mother. Nina’s migration to the U.S. also differed from M’caela’s and Jessia’s experiences because she seemed to play a more direct role in initiating her own migration. Nine wanted to migrate, as she reported, because of her interest and curiosity in visiting the U.S. and getting to know her father. Despite differences between Nina, Jessica, and M’caela, and between their experiences migrating to the U.S., all three teenage girls engaged in the process of physically crossing borders with plans to remain in the U.S., and, in doing so, have defied transnationalism. Similar to other transnational family strategies (communication, remittances, consejos), these youths’ decisions to engage in the process of reconfiguring the transnational family was influenced by their developmental characteristics and/or because their U.S.-based migrant parents felt that their age and developmental characteristics necessitated their recent journeys to the U.S. (e.g., M’caela and Jessica). By crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, these youth have exerted influence on the U.S. immigration and deportation systems that are intended to prevent individuals without permission to enter the U.S. from doing so. They have also committed “illegal” acts and dramatically shifted the transnational and mixed-status characteristics of their families.

**Socio-legal and sociopolitical strains.** Through engaging in the strategy of reconfiguring the transnational family, Nina, Jessica, and M’caela have also significantly
influenced the family relationships in which they participate. The teens exchanged the proximity of the relationships they had maintained with their Guatemala-based relatives for their physical presences in the U.S. and in the lives of their U.S.-based parent(s), and in Jessica and M’caela’s cases, U.S.-based based siblings. They also entered the U.S. as unauthorized migrants, joining, if only temporarily, the 11.2 million migrants who occupy spaces of liminal legality in the U.S. (Bibler Coutin, 2011; Passel & Cohn, 2011). Because of the girls’ statuses as minors, however, they will not be present in the U.S. but “legally absent” like their parents (Bibler Coutin, 2000), and may have chances to permanently adjust their statuses. This is not possible for the majority of parents in this study.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of their immigration cases, these young girls have crossed borders to connect with family, in the same way that the previous communication and remittances from U.S.-based migrants crossed borders to connect transnational family members to one another (see Figure 2). While these adolescents crossed the U.S.-Mexico border without permission from the U.S. government, they are receiving protections through the same socio-legal and sociopolitical forces in the U.S. that enforce statuses of liminal legality on their undocumented migrant parents. In this way, these girls and their families are also transgressing immigration and deportation systems for the sake of family reunification.

While the migration of teenagers was one way that participant families have recently defied transnationalism to resolve the tensions in their relationships related to U.S. socio-legal forces and family separation, several fathers in this study have also traveled back and forth between the U.S. and Guatemala with similar goals in mind.
Cesar explained that 15 years ago he returned to Guatemala to reunify with his wife and children and “con mi poco dinero que puedo ahorrar, me fui allá para conseguir un negocio,” “with my little bit of money that I was able to save, I went there in order to start a business.” To my surprise, in response to the question of how he felt to return to Guatemala, Cesar explained: “Triste. Porque yo fui a trabajar otra vez y sé que no ganabas suficiente, no hay mucho trabajo, o sea, después cinco años otra vez negociando, no fui hacer nada. después me vine otra vez para acá,” “Sad. Because I went to work again and you know I wasn’t able to earn enough, there’s not a lot of work in Guatemala, or in other words, after five years of working in my business, I wasn’t able to do anything. So I had to come to the U.S. again.” While it wasn’t clear if Cesar’s sadness was about the failure of his business or the need to migrate again, or both, Cesar, his wife, and their son Leopold also discussed the difficulties the family has experienced because Cesar has had to remain in the U.S. for a decade since migrating a second time.

Miguel (Family 1) also returned to Guatemala after spending several years working in the U.S. In his case, however, he migrated to the U.S. for a second time with his wife, Julia, leaving their children in Guatemala in the care of their maternal grandmother. Cesar and Miguel’s initial returns to Guatemala, and their second migrations to the U.S., significantly influenced their transnational, mixed-status families and the relationships within them. Julia, for example, went from being engaged in a transnational spousal relationship to being involved in transnational parent-child relationships and as an undocumented migrant in the U.S.

While these changes resulted in dramatic shifts in these family systems, according to the husbands and wives in these families, it was their only option in
response to the socioeconomic strains in Guatemala. Similar to Julia, Cristina (Family 6), reported engaging in a chain migration process (see, Foner & Dreby, 2011) and migrating to the U.S. to join her husband after he had spent several years working in the U.S.

Cristina explained that she chose to join her husband and leave her children in Guatemala because, “no alcanza ese dinero—manda dinero por su papa para mantenier a mi y mis hijos—yo le dije yo voy contigo. Vaya, y me vino y llegue aquí llegue aquí en dos mil dos. Yo tenía dos meses aquí y me quede embarazada,” “The money wasn’t sufficient—[my husband] sent money for his father and for me and my children—I said ‘I am going with you.’ So, I came and arrived here in 2002. I was here for two months before I was pregnant.” Cristina mentioned that when she was pregnant, she stayed home while her husband continued working. Her financial contributions to her family in Guatemala, were, thus, delayed for nearly a year. Julia also mentioned that when she had her first child in the U.S., she stayed home while her husband Miguel supported her, their baby in the U.S., and their family in Guatemala. It is important to note that when this occurred, these parents’ goals of migrating to the U.S. to earn and support transnational families were put on hold for a time.

**Strains in sibling relationships related to reconfiguring the transnational family.** It’s possible that children who remain in their migrant parents’ origin countries, such as the Guatemala-based adolescents in this study, recognize this contradiction, or, in other terms, how life course occurrences such as the birth of a new sibling in the U.S. may postpone the ability of a migrant parent to earn and send remittances to them from the U.S. and/or pose other challenges to transnational parent-child relationships. If this is the case, Guatemala-based youth may be experiencing complicated emotions towards the
birth of new siblings in the U.S. Jessica, for example, in the workshop at Fe y Alegría in July, 2010, teared up when discussing her mother’s prolonged stay in the U.S., and how her family in the U.S. now includes a step-father and a half-sister (her other half-sister was not yet born at the time of the workshop). It was unclear, at the time, if these tears were related to her mother’s physical absence, discontentment about the expansion of her family in the U.S., or both. I was also completely unaware of Jessica’s desires to join her family in the U.S. during the workshop.

Additionally, in a spring 2011 interview, Saira who described “having love” for her migrant parents, Cristina and Marlon, despite not seeing them for nearly a decade, responded to the question of whether she felt a “lazo” “tie” to her two U.S.-based siblings with a quick and clear “no.” When I asked why this was the case, Saira had trouble elaborating on her response. I pressed on and asked if she loved her siblings in the U.S. and Saira answered “más o menos,” “more or less.” She then explained that she had ambivalent feelings because “ellos no conozco. No hablan con ellos,” “I haven’t met them, I don’t speak to them.” While it seemed logical that Saira would have an ambivalent or confusing relationship with two younger siblings she has never met, the assurance with which this rather shy and taciturn 12-year old described her weak ties to them, after struggling to convey her thoughts and emotions throughout the interview, suggested that she also experienced some negative emotions towards them.

Saira eventually expressed how although she wants to talk to her siblings, “no quieren hablar conmigo,” “they don’t want to speak with me.” She added that her mother would never force her siblings in the U.S., and her little brother in particular, to talk on the phone because “va a llorar el nene,” “The little baby would cry.” Saira’s narrative
here suggested she felt strains in her relationship with her U.S.-based siblings and that this could be related to her feeling some jealousy towards them for being in the U.S. and physically with her parents, while Saira and her brother Julio lived in a village of Zacualpa with their grandmother Sabina.

When I visited Saira’s family in the U.S., including both of her parents and her two U.S.-born and U.S.-citizen siblings in March 2011, I observed the siblings playing a Michael Jackson Xbox video-dance game while their parents admiringly watched. It seemed that these siblings were very happy and fairly assimilated to U.S. society and enjoying some of its material benefits while Saira and her brother Julio lived in one of the most modest village homes of all the families in this study. Perhaps Saira was also aware of this reality to some degree, which affected her feelings towards her siblings.

Sabina, Saira’s grandmother, noted that her U.S.-based grandchildren are “pura gringa,” “pure foreigners” and speak no K’iche’ and very little Spanish. I observed this myself when I visited with them. While Cristina and Marlon, the undocumented migrant parents in the family, speak mostly in Spanish, their children communicate in English. This language barrier likely contributes to the limited communication Saira maintains with her U.S.-based siblings, even though she interprets this lack of communication with her siblings as their unwillingness or disinterest in communicating with her on the phone.

After learning about Saira’s feelings toward her siblings in the U.S., I realized it was possible that Julio experienced some of the same emotions, which could explain some of the strains experienced in the relationship between him and his parents in the U.S. Specifically, Julio’s disengagement from the cross-border communication process and his angry behaviors toward his parents’ efforts to be present in his life could be
related to his feelings about his parents’ migrations, and the birth of two younger siblings in the U.S.

The only Guatemala-based adolescent who expressed a fondness towards his siblings in the U.S. was Ben. When Ben was looking at pictures that I had brought from the U.S. to Guatemala for his family in February, 2012, including pictures of his six-year old brother, Jon, Ben said “quiero ver más fotos de Jon,” “I want to see more pictures of Jon.” Ben is also the only adolescent boy, however, who got to meet his U.S.-based sibling. Jon and another U.S.-citizen cousin made the trip to Guatemala several summers ago, and spent several weeks getting to know his Guatemala-based older siblings, Ben and Deborah. It’s possible that this visit made all the difference in the transnational sibling bond between Jon and Ben.

Perhaps if Saira and Julio’s siblings made the journey to Guatemala, they too would feel an established tie to them. Whatever the reason, Saira, in particular, does not appear to feel a closeness to her U.S.-based siblings. This strain was only one of several that multiple members of Saira’s family, Family 6, discussed in interviews. Family 6, it seemed, experienced the most strains to its transnational, mixed-status family system, and particularly in the relationships between Julio and his parents, Cristina and Marlon, and possibly, in the cross-border sibling relationships between Saira and Julio in Guatemala and their siblings in the U.S. Despite these challenges, Cristina, Marlon, and their Guatemala-adolescent daughter, Saira, as well as her caregiver-grandmother, Sabina, conveyed beliefs that the migrations of Marlon, and later, Cristina, to the U.S. were necessary and initiated for the sake of the transnational family as a whole. This family,
like all of the participant families who defied transnationalism and altered the transnational configurations of their families, reported that they had no other options.

**Reconfiguring the transnational family and socio-legal forces.** For families who “sent for” their adolescent daughters, they explained that the socio-legal factors related to undocumented status, heightened border security, and more stringent deportation policies and practices, such as work site raids, over the last five years had negatively influenced transnational family relationships and motivated them to bring their daughters to the U.S. Heightened border security was identified as a significant strain on transnational family relationships because it meant U.S.-based parents could not travel back and forth between the U.S and Guatemala as the fathers in Families 1 and 7 had done previously.

Specifically, participants expressed the belief that if they wanted to, they could return to Guatemala to visit and spend time with aging relatives and their developing children, but that should they need to labor in the U.S. again, they would not be able to make it back without serious consequences. These consequences were described as being detained at the border or suffering while *en camino* (en route) because heightened border security often results in migrants traversing more dangerous routes to get into the U.S. (see, e.g., Sarabia, 2011). Thus, U.S.-based parents and Guatemala-based caregivers especially, had an understanding that prolonged separation, as will be discussed in the next section, was the reality the family was living in because of the “impossibility of circular migration” (Hagan et al., 2008).

When discussing his desire to return to Guatemala and see his children and wife there, but why he was unable to do so, Cesar, (Family 7) explained: “Quisiera tener
papeles para salir para mirar y verlos y todo eso [pero] no hay [una manera], o sea que no pudiera salir y entrar. Ahora puedo salir pero ya no regresar,” “I would like to have papers in order to be able to leave and look at them and to see them and all of that but there’s no way, or rather, you would not be able to come and go. Now you are able to leave but not return.” As mentioned earlier, Cesar’s wife Raquel also relayed an understanding that circular migration was impossible because of U.S. socio-legal systems. However, as Raquel repeated multiple times in the interview “que puede hacer,” “what can one do.” According to Raquel, the prolonged separation she is experiencing from her husband in the U.S. is a consequence of immigration and deportation policies, and there is little she or her husband can do about the constraints in their relationships and family experiences that result from these policies. Antonio and his Guatemala-based wife Marina (Family 8) also viewed their family’s separation as a negative consequence forced by the socio-legal context in the U.S. Because Antonio knew that “cualquier momento pueden reportar la gente,” “whichever moment they can report people [to ICE],” he had decided to “aguantar,” “to endure,” his experience of prolonged separation from his wife and younger children in Guatemala.

While the impossibility of circular migration had deterred U.S.-based migrant parents in this study from coming and going between the U.S. and Guatemala over the last decade, socio-legal forces have also deterred some of these parents from “sending” for their children. For example, several U.S.-based parents reported having set money aside for their children’s future migrations to the U.S. during early phases of family separation. Miguel and Julia (Family 1), for example, discussed how they had set money aside to send for their children during 2002-2007. However, when a work-site raid took
place in their community and Julia was arrested and detained for nine days, their plans shifted dramatically. Julia explained that this event changed her view of the U.S and her feelings of security there. In Julia’s words:

Entonces estaba pensando eso, juntando el dinero para hacerlo venir a ellos acá. Cuando nos teníamos casi cumpliendo el año yo pensando eso, dije, en enero o en marzo, estaba yo seguro para mandar a traer mis hijos porque yo estaba lista con el dinero yo lo tenía el dinero entonces este primera mes del año lo voy hacer. Entonces estábamos preparando todo este dinero… Y estábamos preparando todo eso cuando fue la redada allí se quebró todo.

I was thinking of saving the money in order to do it, for them to come here. When the year was ending, I said, in January or March, I was sure I was going to send for my children to be brought here because I was ready with the money so the first month of the year I was going to do it and so we prepared all the money. And so we had been preparing all the money when the raid happened, that shattered everything.

In addition to detention and deportation affecting U.S.-based migrants’ plans to bring their children to the U.S., youths’ own plans for reuniting with their parents changed as news of detention and deportation was transmitted across borders. Guatemala-based youth expressed “fearing” el camino (the journey) to the U.S. because of the stories they had heard from migrant relatives in the U.S. When Julia’s daughter, Deborah, was first interviewed in the summer of 2010, she shared her belief that Guatemala was a safer and better place to live than the U.S. She also declared that she had no intention of migrating to the U.S. to join her parents there, despite her parents’ desires for her to do so. She explained: “Pues mis padres prefieren que nosotros dos nos vamos a ir allá. Pero ya yo no quiero porque me voy asustar, es que en el desierto dice que ‘vas a sufrir allí.’” “My parents prefer us [my brother and me] to go there but I don’t want to because I am going to be scared in the desert, it’s because they say ‘you are going to suffer [in the desert].’” While Deborah voiced her reluctance towards migrating in 2010, when her
grandfather died two years earlier, according to Deborah’s mother, Deborah called and said: “yo no voy a quedar aquí, yo voy allí,” “I am not staying here, I am going [to the U.S.].” As of October 2011, Deborah’s mother Julia received asylum status and began arranging for Deborah and her brother Ben to receive the visas with which they would be able to travel to the U.S. “legally.” When visiting with these adolescents in Guatemala in February 2012, both opined that they are against the idea of migrating to the U.S.

**Employment issues.** In addition to strains on transnational family life related to individual/interpersonal developmental changes, experiences of liminal legality, detention and deportation practices, and heightened border security, participant families described challenges to U.S. employment as straining their relationships and their abilities to utilize transnational family processes. This may be because undocumented, migrant parents in each family reported that a major reason for migrating was: “para conseguir trabajo y sacar la familia adelante,” “in order to find work and move ahead financially, as a family.”

Despite parental migrants’ savvy and the serious efforts they put into finding work, all families explained that their migrant relatives experienced many obstacles to finding work in the U.S. Maria, Mauricio’s wife, (Family 3) explained, “Entonces se fue, entonces cuando el llego casi no había trabajo, trabajó en una compañía, sí, pero no era trabajo fijo,” “So he went and when he arrived there basically wasn’t much work, he found some work in a company, but it wasn’t steady work.” Maria also explained that because it took several years for her husband to find work in the U.S., he had to prolong his stay in the U.S., and it wasn’t until several years after he migrated that he began
earning sufficiently to support his family. Before finding steady work, according to

Maria:

Antes nos ayudaba y apoyaba así dinero con gastos pues pero no era mucho, o
sea no es mucho para cubrir todo, digamos, y también este lo que hacía antes.
Como antes aquí no habían teléfonos, o sea habían pero cuatro cinco tal vez en
total… entonces hablábamos poco con él o sea que no hablaba con su hija
digamos. O sea que habla más conmigo y no hablábamos mucho por poco tiempo
antes. Se pagan mucho también cuatro o cinco quetzales un minuto.

Before he helped and supported us with money for bills but it wasn’t much or
rather it wasn’t enough to cover all of our expenses, and so this is what it was like
before. Before there were not a lot of telephones, there were some but maybe four
or five in total [in Zacualpa], so we only spoke a little with him, he wasn’t
speaking a lot to his daughters. He spoke to me and we didn’t speak a lot, only for
a short amount of time. It also cost a lot, like four or five quetzales (.50 or .60
USD) a minute.

In the above excerpt, it is clear that the layers of contextual strains in the lives of
transnational, mixed-status families overlap significantly. Because Mauricio is an
undocumented migrant and because of the limited work available to undocumented
migrants in the U.S., when he arrived in the U.S. he could only find irregular work. This
lack of work had repercussions for his family members in Guatemala. Mauricio could
only send enough money home to pay for some of the family bills, and they could only
afford to engage in infrequent cross-border communication. As Maria explained, when
Mauricio first arrived, he rarely spoke with his daughters in Guatemala because the costs
of communication were very expensive. When Mauricio initially migrated, Mauricio and
his daughters faced barriers to communicating and maintaining a transnational tie through
the phone. Maria also reveals how a macro-level socioeconomic strain related to
international communication technologies (ICTs) and globalization exerted influence on
her and her family members’ transnational family relationships, as she discussed a lack of
phones in Zacualpa when Mauricio migrated in 1999. Because of this lack of phones, the
family had very limited and infrequent means of speaking with Mauricio in the U.S.

When Mauricio first migrated, the technologies that play a role in transnational communication processes today (i.e., cellular phones, Skype, social media), were not as advanced or readily available to migrants and their relatives, which caused an additional strain to transnational relationships. Recent research has shown that with advances in technology, there are multiple means of communicating transnationally that are available to and accessed by migrants and their relatives in origin countries, even those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. These ICTs are accessed so frequently that some scholars argue they have transformed families into transnational entities that engage in relational processes and social ties across borders (e.g., Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2011).

Mauricio and Maria’s daughter, Nina, also relayed her understanding of socio-legal and socioeconomic strains and the difficulties her father encountered when trying to find steady work in the U.S., and how these affected their transnational father-daughter relationship. Before migrating to the U.S. in 2011, in a July 2010 interview in Guatemala, Nina recalled “Como en mil novecientos noventa y nueve, dos mil, dos mil uno, era difícil hablar con el porque el no tenia mucho pisto y todo y porque estaba caro usar el teléfono. [Pero después], ella podría comprar un celular. Ahora hablábamos cada semana,” “So in 1999, 2000, and 2001 it was difficult to talk to him because he didn’t have a lot of money and all and because it was expensive to use the telephone. But after, she [my mother] was able to buy a cell phone. Now we talk every week.”

Carlos (Family 4) also recalled the same strains on transnational relationships and cross-border communication that were directly tied to challenges to employment in the
U.S. Carlos explained that when his father arrived in the U.S. in 2002:

Bueno a veces nos llamaba pero como uno el no tenía tanto trabajo le costó conseguir trabajo y no pudo conseguir, no nos hablamos, hablamos una vez por semana. Ya veces nosotros le llevábamos carta y ya a veces, y después conseguí otro trabajo y dos veces una semana nos llamaban. Y bueno, ahora siguen. Mi mamá nos hablan todo los días.

Well sometimes he was calling us but because he didn’t have work, it was difficult for him to find work, and so when one isn’t able to find work, we don’t talk, only once a week maybe. And sometimes we would send him letters. And now, after, he found other work he calls us two times a week. And it has continued like this up until now. My mother she calls us every day.

In addition to revealing how the employment challenges influence the communication Carlos maintains with his father in the U.S., the above excerpt also reveals that Carlos’s mother, regardless of what her employment situation in the U.S. may be, calls him daily. Here this sibling-caregiver in Guatemala, as with other adolescents in this study, reports engaging in cross-border communication with his mother in the U.S. at a more frequent rate than with his father, even though (or perhaps because) his father has been physically absent from his life for a longer period of time. This finding supports previous research suggesting that migrant mothers call their children in origin countries more often than migrant fathers (e.g., Foner & Dreby, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2011).

The Guatemala-based grandmother-caregiver, Katy (Family 9), also explained that before her granddaughter M’caela migrated to join her parents in the U.S., M’caela’s mother and Katy’s daughter, Laura, consistently communicated with M’caela from the U.S., and supporting her and M’caela with earnings from working in the U.S. For this reason, Katy explained, when Laura couldn’t find work in the U.S., the family in Guatemala was affected. She said: “Hemos afectado. Un tiempo cuando no tenian trabajo y no mandan dinero,” “We were affected. One time when they didn’t have work and
couldn’t send money.” Here again it is clear how the socioeconomic context in Guatemala—in which relatives rely on remittances from the U.S. for their sustenance—combines with the challenges U.S.-based migrants face to finding work in the U.S., exacerbating strains on transnational family relationships. The use of family strategies and cross-border processes of communication, remittance sending and consejos supports the development and maintenance of family bonds, but these strategies are strained by the transnational contexts in which family relationships occur. Socioeconomic factors, such as lack of work in Guatemala, and the absence of communication technologies when family members first migrated, for example, influence and explain family members’ motivations for migrating initially, for remaining in the U.S., as well as the strains on transnational family processes in which they engage.

**Socioeconomic strains in Guatemala and the U.S.** Families explained throughout this research that “no hay trabajo,” “there’s no work,” in Guatemala and this is why their relatives migrated to the U.S. Teodor (Family 2), a grandfather-caregiver explained that despite the fact that Guatemala is filled with rich and fertile land: “No hay trabajo, no hay donde sembrar la gente, no hay maiz no hay frijoles no hay trabajo, no hay. La gente se fueron para comprar pedacitos de terreno porque no hay trabajo,” “There’s no work, there’s no place for people to plant, there is no corn, no beans, there’s no work. The people migrated in order to buy bits of land because there is no work.”

Teodor described the lack of land ownership and the lack of industry in Guatemala as socioeconomic strains that motivate Maya K’iche’ parents, like his daughter Julianna, to migrate to the U.S. without documents. According to Teodor, when families own enough land, they can rely on their own physical labor for food and as a
means of support. Because his daughter did not have plentiful work in Guatemala nor own property, Teodor described her undocumented migration as “la única opción,” “the only option.” Similarly, Sabina (Family 6) explained that despite the difficulties she and her grandchildren (Julio and Saira) face in Guatemala, she and her granddaughter Saira prefer her daughter Cristina to remain in the U.S. with her husband and U.S. citizen children until they can buy land for the family in Guatemala. She expressed: “Saira también les dice que quiere que ellos están esperando hasta comprar un pedazo de terreno porque en el que nosotros estamos ahorita, no es de nosotros, entonces ella quiere que sus padres les compran un terreno, allí pueden hacer su casa,” “Saira also says she wants them to wait until they can buy a bit of land, because where we are living is not our land, so she wants her parents to buy land so they can make their house.”

Cristina, Saira’s mother and Sabina’s daughter, also noted during the interview in the U.S. that the need to buy land was one of her motivations for migrating and prolonging her stay in the U.S. Cristina also pointed out that her need to buy land was related to the death of her father during the war. After discussing her father’s disappearance and death during the war, Cristina said:

Por eso yo me vine aquí, porque no tengo mi papá, mi mamá no tiene nada- que va mantener a mi? No es igual si uno no tiene papá, aunque esta casada, es diferente cuando no tiene su papá. Cuando tiene su papá le da un poquito ropa, un poquito pedazo de terreno. Por él yo vine aquí.

For this reason I came here, because I didn’t have my father, my mother doesn’t have anything- who would provide for me? It’s not the same if you don’t have your father—even if you are married— it’s different when you don’t have your father. When you have your father he gives you clothes, a bit of land. Because of my father I came here.

Similarly, Cesar noted that he believed he had to migrate because he was orphaned during the war. In answer to the interview question of “porque usted decidió ‘yo me voy
“Porque la vida era un poco difícil. Yo me quede sin nada pues sin la ayuda de mis papas me quede. Como me quede sin pedazo de terreno. Sin nada. Y me costó. Como para donde vivir.” “Because life was a bit difficult. I was left without anything, without the help of my parents. I was left without any land. With nothing. And it was difficult. I had nowhere to live.”

Here it is clear that economic forces dominate participants’ understandings of motivations for migrating, and that some families identify economic strains as connected to the armed conflict and the loss of loved ones during the armed conflict. While Cristina and Cesar discuss migrating to buy land for their respective families because of a lack of inheritance and support from the older generation that died or was killed during the war, Julianna’s father, Teodor, also noted that his daughter journeyed to the U.S. to buy property for the family.

It is possible that Teodor is referring to his daughter migrating to expand or renovate the property they lived on and own, as Teodor appeared to be middle-class and the house he owned was decorated with fine architectural features, including regal columns on the front of the house. In contrast, Sabina, Cristina’s mother, seemed to be of a lower socioeconomic status. Sabina was renting a modest adobe property in a village of Zacualpa at the time of this study. Additionally, Sabina’s daughter Cristina admitted that in Guatemala, “ahora no tenemos nada allá. Ni terreno ni casa nada ni un negocio. No tenemos un negocio all´á ni nada. No tenemos un dinero así en el banco, nada.” “We have nothing over there now. No land, no house, and no business. We don’t have money in the bank, nothing.”
Despite potential differences in their socioeconomic statuses, all families described the lack of work in Guatemala and the desire to build their own homes as strongly influencing the migration of relatives to the U.S. and the transnationalizing of the family. Family members explained that because the economic challenges in Guatemala persist (despite the high rate of remittance flows from the U.S. to Guatemala, see, e.g., Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010), their U.S.-based relatives are also forced to prolong their stays in the U.S. Miguel (Family 1), as presented earlier, reminds his son Ben that he and his wife migrated to and remain in the U.S. because they would not be able to have built the house Ben lives in with his grandmother and sister on earnings of 200 quetzales ($26 USD) a day in Guatemala. According to Miguel, while there is work in Guatemala, it is insufficient to support the needs of one’s family.

Families, like Miguel’s, describe the economic strains in Guatemala as both the cause of migration and of the family’s transnational configuration. Guatemala-based wife, mother, and grandmother Marina (Family 8) also explained that her U.S.-based undocumented migrant husband and five older children should stay in the U.S. as long as they can because: “si vienen se dan cuenta de que aquí ahora con cien quetzales ya no se puede comprar nada,” “if they come, we realize that with 100 quetzales ($13 USD) one cannot buy anything.” Marina and her husband Antonio agreed that he will remain in the U.S. as long as he can, despite the emotional strains he and his family experience related to his migration and physical absence. Other participant families also shared their views that while the reality of migration and separation is difficult for relatives on both sides of the border, it is a necessary struggle given Guatemala’s poor economic conditions.
In addition to poverty and high levels of unemployment, Guatemala remains one of the slowest growing economies in Central America despite its rich resources (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010). As participant families reported, an additional socioeconomic strain on transnational family relationships was related to the lack of international communication technologies in Guatemala until the last few years. According to participants, only a decade ago relatives of migrants in the U.S who live in Zacualpa had to wait in long lines in the town center biweekly or monthly to have a brief phone call with a relative in the U.S. The limited access to communication networks prevented transnational families from communicating on a regular basis.

The scarcity of telephones and cell phone towers in Zacualpa and its surrounding villages is a strain that seems to have lessened for families as their separation transitioned into being long-term, and as globalization has increasingly influenced the southern hemisphere and the world (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011). As Maria and her daughter Nina recalled, after cell phone towers were developed throughout the town of Zacualpa and in several villages, it still took time for them to be able to afford cell phones. Often, only the head of household had a cellular phone, limiting the contact between Guatemala-based children and their undocumented U.S.-based migrant parent(s). Several adolescents, like Deborah (Family 1), also reported that it wasn’t until they were 10-yearsold that they were able to send text messages to family in the U.S., after learning how to use the texting option on cell phones that were only recently introduced to Guatemala-based households. Deborah explained that learning how to send text messages both piqued her interest in the transnational communication process with her U.S.-based migrant parents
and made the prospect of communicating with parents in the U.S more fun than obligatory.

From the data above, it is clear that socioeconomic factors in Guatemala motivate and sustain the migration of relatives to the U.S. with both positive and negative consequences for their families in Guatemala and their cross-border relationships. The findings from this study also show that economic strains in the U.S. influence transnational family life and the strategies family members utilize to maintain contact across borders. Raquel (Family 7) noted that her husband was struggling financially in the U.S. and that this was affecting the relationship she and her children tried to maintain with him from Guatemala. She explained:

So well sometimes he isn’t able to continue supporting us with what he used to send but I know here you aren’t able to, you aren’t able to live. I wanted to go to [the U.S.] but I am alone with them [my children], I worry. And sometimes they are sad for him too, and like I told you, they are not able to talk with him now, and he cannot call, he doesn’t have a phone. So I say, “you have to arrange to have a phone.” He tells me “no because it’s an expense also so for this, with my 50 dollars it’s better I send it to you for your expenses.” So I am not able to [tell him] to do it. Also there is not work there, before there was work. In contrast now there is no work here or there, many are without work.

Other families also discussed the scarcity of work in the U.S. and the consequences this has had for their transnational family relationships. Lola (Family 4), for example, described how she had planned to return to Guatemala after three years, but
had to prolong her stay, “porque cuando yo llegue yo no tenía, no hay trabajo. No trabajo. Un año y medio no tenia trabajo yo aquí en la casa. No, tengo a pagar la deuda todavía. Eso es lo mas duro,” “because when I arrived I didn’t have work, there wasn’t work. No work. One year and a half I didn’t have work, I stayed in the house. I still haven’t paid the debt. This is the hardest part.”

Cristina (Family 6) also discussed having plans to reunify with her children by sending for them, but because she and her husbands’ combined earnings were limited, they could not afford the trip. She explained:

Con el trabajo no alcanza el dinero. Solo pagar la renta. Para bil de gas, para bil de electricidad, para la renta, y pagar por Direct TV…y nosotros queremos a traer pero al dinero… y mi mamá dice que no quiere para ellos ir porque si va mis hijos yo le pone llorar y le pone triste.

With the work the money doesn’t cover everything. Only for paying rent. For paying bills for gas, electricity, rent, and Direct TV…and we wanted to bring them but we saved…And one time my mother said she didn’t want me to because if my children would go she would cry and be sad.

The above narrative from Cristina reflects how the limited wages U.S.-based migrants earn, as well as the expenses they report accrue in the U.S., can create tensions in their transnational family relationships. U.S.-based migrants struggle to pay their rent, their bills, and for material goods in the U.S. that are enjoyed by many residents here, such as Direct TV., in addition to the bills of their relatives in Guatemala. Because of the costs of living in the U.S., spending habits, and the needs of family members in the U.S. and Guatemala, migrant parents choose to put off plans for family reunification. This narrative also reveals, however, that despite the previously described developmental challenges that exacerbate problems in caregiver-child relationships in Guatemala, grandparents like Sabina, Cristina’s mother, attach to the children in their care and
communicate the sadness they would experience if these children were separated from them.

Cristina and Lola’s narratives thus describe how they believe family separation experiences are prolonged because of socioeconomic strains in Guatemala and the U.S. Despite Lola’s strenuous labor in the U.S., (she commutes 45 minutes six days a week to work from 3PM-1AM), the challenges she experienced when trying to find work upon arriving have reportedly left her transnational family with the additional burden of paying off debt. This debt is accrued by undocumented migrants who have to pay a coyote (human smuggler) to facilitate their undocumented migration to the U.S. While each family in this study had debt from their initial migration, only Lola’s family had not succeeded in paying off the debt five years after her arrival in the U.S. As the family explained, this was also because the money they earned in the U.S. was first going towards their five children’s studies in Guatemala.

Julia (Family 1) also explained when she arrived in the U.S. in 2002, “Por mis hijos si por mis hijos ese día estaba muy triste pero llegue aquí yo lo que pensaba que por la deuda que yo debía, porque debíamos mucho dinero cuando venimos allá, que no era fácil le dije yo para gana eso ochenta mil quetzales,” “For my children, for my children this day was very sad but I arrived and what I was thinking about was the debt that I owed, because we owed a lot of money when we came here. It wasn’t easy I tell you to earn the 80,000 quetzales ($10,300 USD).”

**Conclusion.** From the stories participant families shared, it is clear that the socioeconomic conditions they experience in Guatemala and the U.S. have real consequences for the transnational, mixed-status family relationships in which families
are engaged. Transnational mothers like Julia, Lola, and Cristina reflected on the worry families encounter when they have bills to pay and/or debt from their border crossings with only irregular, minimal, and low-wage labor available to them in the U.S.

Guatemala-based caregivers, including Katy, Raquel, Maria and Sabina, spoke at length about how the scarcity of work in the U.S. affects their U.S.-based relatives’ abilities to find work and earn enough money to send the remittances on which Guatemala-based relatives rely. Maria and Carlos described how in addition to remittance processes, the transnational family strategy of communication was affected by socioeconomic factors in Guatemala and the U.S. For these families and others in this study, the slow development of and access to new technologies in Guatemala prevented family members from engaging in frequent cross-border communication processes. As Raquel explained, lack of work in the U.S. also prevents U.S.-based relatives from accessing phones with which they can communicate with their loved ones in Guatemala.

Socioeconomic and work factors were only two types of strains on which transnational, mixed-status family members reflected in this study. Their interviews suggested that individual and interpersonal developmental changes also strained relationships between adolescents and their caregivers in Guatemala and between adolescents and their migrant parents. Behaviors that often accompany the phase of adolescence, such as independence seeking, were observed among participants in this study. It seemed that this behavior and attitude at times interacted negatively with the strategies U.S.-based, undocumented migrant parents utilized to maintain ties to their children in Guatemala. It’s plausible that when U.S.-based migrant parents tried to be present in the lives of their children through communication and consejos processes, for
example, that these actions evoked rebellious responses from children, who were at times already angry at their parents for migrating. As Guatemala-based children developed into adolescents, their caregivers also aged. In some cases this meant that caregivers were aging from adolescent boys to young men, while in others caregivers changed from being young grandparents to older grandparents with various health problems. These changes undoubtedly yielded certain reactions in the Guatemala-based children in this study who depended on their caregivers in various ways.

In some cases, developmental changes in Guatemala-based adolescents also seemed to influence them and their U.S.-based migrant parent(s) to reconfigure the transnational family and challenge the restrictive socio-legal and sociopolitical context in which U.S.-based migrants live. This occurred as parents made arrangements for the adolescents to migrate to the U.S. without authorization. The undocumented migration of three adolescent girls in this study showed that transnational, mixed-status families can act on the restrictive, sociopolitical contexts in which they work and live, even if in limited ways and with significant negative and positive consequences for family members.

Finally, an additional strain that appears in many of the examples described above relates to the role of time on transnational family relationships and the strategies used within the families. Specifically, all families in this study were experiencing prolonged separations in which U.S.-based migrant parent(s) had remained in the U.S. longer than they had initially planned. This prolonged separation was described as an arrangement between family members in both the U.S. and Guatemala (see, for example, narratives from Marina and Antonio, Family 8), and as a seemingly unavoidable result of socio-
legal, socioeconomic, and U.S. employment strains. It nonetheless has serious consequences for the maintenance of family relationships across borders and over time.

IV. Phases of Separation for Transnational, Mixed-Status Maya K’iche´ Families

This final section describes in detail the prolonged phase of separation in addition to the initial and long-term phases that all participant families experienced. The discussion includes examples of how the strategies of communication, remittances and consejos are utilized by transnational family members during each period of separation. This section also refers to some of the strains described above that are encountered by transnational family members in Guatemala and the U.S. during each phase of the migration experience. By clarifying how transnational family strategies are utilized at different points in the migration and family separation experience, this section illustrates the dynamic nature of transnational family relationships throughout years of separation and how families reorganize and are reconstituted in response to challenges in their transnational contexts (Menjívar, 2012). Finally, this section discusses how families understood the prolonged separation phase, which they were experiencing at the time of the study, as a significant strain forced by aspects of U.S. and Guatemala contexts, and the ways in which several families confronted this strain.

Initial separation. The Maya K´iche´ families who participated in this research have histories of internal migration and family separation within Guatemala that date back to the 1500s (Lovell, 1988). Additionally, it has been documented that Maya began migrating to the U.S. in the 1960s, when the armed conflict in Guatemala was beginning (Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010). Thus, for the Maya from Guatemala, family separation has been experienced in different ways over several centuries. The families in this
dissertation, however, only experienced family separation between the United States and Guatemala over the last two decades. Almost all U.S.-based migrant parents in participant families migrated to the U.S. in the late 1990s or the early 2000s (Lola is the exception).

Parents like Julia (Family 1), point out that family separation between Guatemala and the U.S., which she initiated in 2002, is more difficult than prior experiences of family separation within Guatemala. In summer 2010, she explained:

Más difícil porque tú sabes que como la distancia que estamos nosotros. Muy retirado, no es igual, como le digo yo mi mamá, a veces yo estuviera trabajando como en la capital yo podría ir—aunque aunque no tenga dinero que yo prestar dinero o hago como para económicamente de eso—yo sé que no me muero busca la manera trata la manera cómo pero irme con ellos o verlo o tratar la manera estar conmigo mismos pero como un lugar aquí bien distanciado no puedo hacer nada. Aunque yo me pasó la vida imposible tengo que aceptarlo porque está muy retirado ni yo puedo irse i ni ellos pueden venir conmigo porque está muy riesgoso, en el camino, eso es el motivo que no podemos estar junto.

It’s more difficult because you know about the distance between us. It’s very far away, it’s not the same, like I explain to my mother, sometimes I would work in Guatemala City and I would be able to leave—even though I didn’t have money I could borrow money or do something economically—I knew I wouldn’t die looking for a way to be with them or see them or to find a way for them to be with me but in this place, it’s very far away, I am not able to do anything. Although I am living an impossible life but I have to accept it because it’s very far and I am not able to return and they aren’t able to come with me because it’s very risky, the journey, this is the reason we are not able to be together.

Other U.S.-based migrant parents echoed Julia’s description of the difficulties of family separation across distant geographies. Despite the emotional challenges of being separated across borders, at some point, each U.S.-based undocumented migrant parent in this study made the decision to migrate and separate from his or her children in Guatemala as well as from parents, siblings and extended family. The first socio-emotionally acute phase of migration processes for all members of participant
transnational families appeared to be the initial separation period. This phase of migration begins when a parent makes the decision to migrate and leave Guatemala. Across the sample, every migrant parent(s) made the decision to migrate. Some parents also described planning to have a despedida (goodbye) before migrating but not being able to say goodbye, or tell their children they were leaving for the U.S., because of the sadness of the leaving experience. Other parents did say goodbye to their children before they migrated and some even filled them in on their plans for migrating long beforehand. Guatemala-based caregivers were also involved in the initial separation phase. This is because migrant parents often formally asked caregivers if they would provide the care for their children in their absence. According to Paula (Family 1), caregivers also play a vital role in the initial migration process because they have to decide how to respond to the children who are remaining in origin countries while their parents make the journey to the U.S. She explained:

Ellos estaban durmiendo y ellos no se dieron cuenta cuando sus papas se fueron y no les dije la verdad porque ellos iban a llorar y entonces la mamá se los iba llevar. Pero el problema era que si los iban llevar no iba pasar y prestar un dinero mucho dinero y tiene que prestar con el interés y todo. Por eso que a ellos no les dije, porque sí, si van a llorar los niños entonces eso por eso es ellos se quedaron durmiendo y los papas se fueron.

They were sleeping and they didn’t notice their parents were leaving and I didn’t tell them the truth because they would cry and then the mom would have to bring them. But the problem was that if she was going to bring [her children] with her to the U.S., she wouldn’t be able to pass, and she had to borrow money, a lot of money and with interest and all of this. So for this reason I didn’t tell them the truth, because if I did, they would to cry so it was better for them to remain asleep. And then their parents left.

In addition to allowing her grandchildren to sleep through their parents’ departures, Paula recalled lying to her grandchildren about their parents’ whereabouts when they awoke and asked about them. She explained that she used lies because she
perceived them as preventing her grandchildren from being sad. In this way, for Paula, lying was a temporary strategy that allowed her to keep her grandchildren happy in response to what some scholars refer to as the “traumatic” migration and family separation experience (see, Castañeda & Buck, 2011). When her grandchildren asked where their parents were, Paula responded “sus papas están trabajando en el pueblo,” “your parents are working in town.” While the children believed Paula’s white lie initially, they learned the truth soon after. According to Paula, “cuando llegaron ellos allá entonces llamaron entonces ellos supieron que ya están ellos allá,” “when [their parents] arrived over there they called to say they were there so their children realized they were over there [in the U.S].”

Other families in this study shared the same initial separation experience. According to Sabina, her daughter Cristina (Family 6): “Le dijó a su hija Saira, le dijó iba ir a trabajar en la capital, en Guatemala, y al otro, cuando fue lo tenía dos años, le dejó durmiendo, a las tres en la mañana se fue,” “she said to her daughter Saira, she said I am going to work in the capital, Guatemala City, and the other child, he was only two, so she left him while he was sleeping, at three in the morning she left.” Sabina explained that Cristina left this way “porque si le iba decir esta que iba a los EEUU es seguro que va poner triste,” “because if she was going to say that she was going to the U.S. she would certainly make her daughter very sad.”

It seems that when fathers migrated to the U.S., they often told their children of their plans ahead of time, especially if the children they were leaving behind were boys. Seventeen-year old Leopold (family 7) recalled:

Yo me acuerdo porque yo tenía seis años y el otro hermano tenía dos años parece y el otro era reciente nacido. Me acuerdo a mi me dijo que mijo, me voy para los
I remember because I was six-years-old and my other brother was about two and the other was recently born. I remember he told me “my son, I am going to the U.S.,” he told me. And all of us brothers felt pain, sadness, all of us were crying so I began to cry and my other little brother went to hide, hiding because my father was going to leave.”

In cases where mothers migrated when some of their children were older and they believed them to be capable of understanding their reasons for migrating, mothers also reported sharing their plans with their sons and daughters. As described previously, Lola made the decision to migrate after discussing the needs of the family with her oldest son, Carlos, who was to care for his siblings.

Regardless of whether parents formally said goodbye or prepared their children for their migration to the U.S., all family members recalled that their U.S.-based migrant parents first utilized the process of transnational communication to alert their families that they had arrived in the U.S. safely. Guatemala-based caregivers and adolescents in this study reported valuing this cross-border contact because they had worried about their U.S.-based undocumented relatives who had to traverse the dangerous camino between Mexico and the U.S. For example, Leisy, Lola’s 16-year old daughter, recalled that even though she and her siblings were sad when their mother left “Que, ya, llegó, contenta, ya no poniamos triste porque, ya, ella ya llegó,” “When she arrived, we were happy, we weren’t sad anymore because she had arrived.”

The majority of migrants in this study, like Leisy’s mother Lola, crossed the U.S.-Mexico border with the help of expensive coyotes. Describing the experience of crossing the border, Mauricio (Family 3) explained: “Estuviste más de cinco días
tomando un vaso de agua diario y todo los días comía un comida y con deshidratación increíble,” “I was for more than five days drinking one cup of water daily and all the days eating one meal…and with an incredible dehydration.”

**Conclusion.** All the undocumented migrant parents in this study took great risks and made incredible emotional and financial sacrifices to travel to the U.S. For some parents, initial separation consisted of leaving Guatemala without telling their Guatemala-based children about their plans to migrate. For others, their children in Guatemala were aware of their plans to migrate but unhappy about them. Whether it was immediately or some time after the migration of undocumented parents to the U.S., Guatemala-based relatives, and children in particular, were sad to recognize the reality of their family separation and the new transnational family configuration of which they were a part. When U.S.-based migrants called their loved ones following their arrival in the U.S., the majority of relatives in Guatemala reported experiencing moments of relief and happiness. As the next section shows, some of the emotions family members experienced and the steps they took in Guatemala or the U.S. to develop and maintain ties across borders changed as the initial separation phase transitioned into long-term separation.

**Long-term separation.** Despite plans during the initial family separation phase to only work in the U.S. from 2-5 years, participant U.S.-based migrant parents (with the exception of one recently arrived parent) had been living in the U.S. for at least eight years at the time of the study, and some for as many as 12. As was described earlier, many parents claimed that their initial migration plans changed because of the challenges they encountered as undocumented migrants to finding *trabajo fijo* (steady work) in the
U.S. and supporting their family in Guatemala. For example, Mauricio (Family 3) explained:

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Yo vine de mi país y es que me recuerdo una promesa que me les dije a mi mama y mi niña muy pequeña que yo voy a venir por dos años, nada más. Eso fuera mi meta y por eso yo decía de que estar en este país no es fácil. La discriminación—estar sin trabajo—yo vine de Guatemala con un deuda como de seis mil dólares. Seis mil que yo debe pagado a la persona que me trajo y en este país no tenemos seguro social, este era mi meta como: dos años a pagar este deuda. Entonces esos dos años se a convertir a diez años. Gracias a ciertos cambios que actualmente ahora pues estamos mejor que antes. Pero mi mentira, a decir dos años

I came from my country and, I remember, I promised my mother and my very little daughter that I was going for two years, nothing more. This was my goal and for this reason I say that to be in this country isn’t easy. The discrimination—to be without work—I came from my country with $6000 of debt to pay to the person that brought me here and in this country we don’t have social security [cards] so my goal was two years to pay this debt. So these two years converted into ten. Thanks to certain changes we are a lot better than before but it was a lie to say two years.

As separation periods “converted” into more than several years for transnational families, positive and negative changes were experienced by U.S.-based undocumented migrants and their children and elected caregivers in Guatemala. At the same time that parents like Mauricio found steady work and began sending remittances home on a regular basis (see Figure 1), children in Guatemala grew up and began transitioning from early and middle childhood to adolescence. This meant that children could begin taking on a more active role—or disengaging from—the transnational communication processes initiated by their U.S.-based migrant parents. When discussing the negative consequences parents experienced during long-term separation, Mauricio noted:

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Estos diez años, especial con mis hijas, hemos perdidos esta diez años. Como han crecido! Eh nunca hemos comunicado junto y todo eso y sigue mi parte personal si es duro es difícil y mi mama también. Hace un cuatro meses se murió mi abuelita y para mí fue, para mí muy difícil. Yo buscar el sueño Americano porque salida adelante, y mi abuelita para mi es mi segunda mama y todo eso y fue una
These 10 years, especially with my daughters, we have lost these 10 years. How they have grown! How they have grown and we have never communicated together and it continues like this, for me personally it’s hard, it’s difficult, and my mother too. Four months ago my grandmother died and this was very difficult for me. I was looking for the American dream in order to improve my family, and my grandmother for me she is my second mom and all of this was a loss, I still haven’t recuperated. And why, for the simple fact of being in this country without being able to come and go…

Mauricio and other parents in this study identified the inability to travel freely between the U.S. and Guatemala as the reason they missed out on their children’s development and experienced other significant losses from the U.S. As Julia (Family 1) noted, her father, the grandfather of Deborah and Ben, passed away while Julia was in the U.S., which influenced her children to voice their disapproval regarding their parents’ long-term settlement in the U.S. and their fears about remaining in Guatemala with only their grandmother. As Deborah noted in a 2010 interview, “nosotros queremos que van a venir todas nuestras familiares aquí porque es triste, estamos cuatro en está la casa, pues van a venir mis padres, pues, estamos muchos,” “we want all of our relatives to come here because it’s sad, we are four in this house, but if my parents come, we will be many.”

Despite the sadness and loneliness children in Guatemala experience as a result of their family’s long-term separation, they also reported the benefits of remittances from their parents’ labor in the U.S. All of the adolescents in the participant families and their siblings were studying at the time of this dissertation. Several, including Mani (family 5) and Carlos (Family 4), had received their degrees from the vocational schools in the nearby town of Santa Cruz del Quiché.
Additionally, parents in the U.S. and their children and relatives in Guatemala voiced that through utilizing cross-border communication strategies they were able to be present in each other’s lives in some ways, even though parents expressed this most frequently. Saira (Family 6) explained that when she communicates with her mother Cristina, “me siento como que ella esta aqui,” “I feel as if she were here.” Some parents reported communicating with their children daily to stay attuned to the happenings in their lives. While some parents described only being able to call their families in Guatemala weekly, they still felt this was sufficient for maintaining ties with them through the phone. Cesar (Family 7), for example, was able to describe his son Leopold’s hobbies in Guatemala, including “la cría de pollos,” “raising chickens,” even though they struggled to communicate as regularly as other families.

Adolescents in Guatemala also noted that through developing communication patterns with their parents in the U.S., they have grown accustomed to receiving consejos from them as well. Leopold explained: “Platico con mi papa y a veces el me da consejos también,” “I chat with my father and sometimes he gives me life advice.” But Leopold, as with other young men in this study, also viewed a negative consequence of long-term separation in terms of insufficient consejos from his father. When describing how it has felt for his father to be physically absent from his life, Leopold noted:

Casi como es triste. Le duele que él no está con nosotros porque yo miro otros jóvenes este estando su papa los consejos, jugando con ellos, y yo es como que solo mi mama mi mama solo en la casa solo en la casa esta no es igual tener un padre al lado de alguien. Porque no es igual estar con una mujer darnos sus consejos.

It’s almost like it is sad. It hurts that he’s not here with us because I see other youth that have their father, the life advice they receive, they are playing, and me to be with my mother and only my mother in the house it isn’t the same as having
a father at one’s side. It’s not the same to be with a woman, for a woman to give you your life advice.

In the excerpt above, in addition to describing the emotional losses he experiences without his father, Leopold reveals his view that mothers and fathers parent their children differently, and that the presence of a mother in one’s life is different than the presence of a father. Leopold specifically explained how consejos from a mother are substantively different from the consejos fathers give to children, and sons in particular, and how they have a different emotional resonance for children who receive them.

This comment may reflect the role of gender in Mayan families, and how children, and particularly, boys, give more importance to the conventional wisdom offered by men in the family. It could alternatively reflect the increased pressure and responsibility Leopold feels as the oldest son in the family and as the man of the house. Leopold expressed his mature sense of responsibility and care for his siblings when he explained that he wanted to migrate to the U.S. “para llegar al sueños a mis hermanitos. Ayudarlos a ellos. Allá cumplido mis sueños es ayudar a mis hermanos,” “in order to achieve dreams for my little brothers. I want to help them. Helping my bothers is really reaching my dreams.”

Similar to adolescents like Leopold, parents in the U.S. note that the main difficulties they experience in their transnational relationships, despite utilizing cross-border family strategies, are related to physical absences and the inability to see loved ones, including children, siblings, spouses, parents or grandparents, for many years. While utilizing cross-border strategies of communication and consejos assuage some of the sadness of long-term separation, the pain of physical separation persists in children’s and parents’ lives. Lola articulates that since migrating and staying in the U.S.: “Todos se
cambio porque imagines, ellos allá yo no los miró, comó andan haciendo. Si comieron o no comieron o están en la casa o no esta. Así eso cambio cuando yo estoy aquí, “

“Everything has changed because imagine it, they are there and I don’t see them, see how are they doing. If they have eaten or not eaten or are in the house or not. Like this it changed when I came here.”

**Conclusion.** The data from U.S.-based undocumented migrant parents and their Guatemala-based children and elected caregivers show that after being in the U.S. for several years, undocumented migrant parents begin working steadily and can afford the costs of communication, remittances and consejos. While these strategies enable U.S.-based parents to develop and maintain ties with their children and other relatives in Guatemala, their uses of these strategies is strained by many factors in the environment as well as by the emotional consequences of family separation. Adolescents in Guatemala also reveal communication and consejos as important to their relationships with U.S.-based migrant parents, but their discussions include mention of what’s lacking in these transnational parent-child relationships when they occur through the phone and from a distance, and how gender may influence youth’s experience of losses related to family separation. These adolescents and their U.S.-based migrant parents also express that, while cross-border communication is vital to the maintenance of ties across space and over time, “no es lo mismo,” “it’s not the same” as face-to-face communication.

**Prolonged separation.** During this study, all families reported that they were experiencing a much longer period of family separation than initially planned. Similarly, Guatemala-based caregivers and adolescents expressed that they had recently begun to view the transnationality of their family as an indefinite reality, despite parents’ promises
to return. Mauricio’s (Family 3) wife Maria, for example, explained that she believed her husband would return to Guatemala, but when asked about the year of his return, she replied: “saber cuando,” “who knows when.” Mauricio himself explained “voy regresar, una fecha exactamente, no tengo, pero voy regresar,” “I am going to return, an exact date I don’t have, but I am going to return.”

Every participant family voiced that U.S.-based migrant parents were planning to return to Guatemala some day, but planning to stay in the U.S. for the foreseeable future. Some families, such as Cristina and Marlon’s (Family 6), explained that their family’s separation was prolonged because they had not yet saved enough in the U.S. to buy land or a house in Guatemala. Others, such as Antonio and Marina’s (Family 9), voiced their family’s plan to remain separated by borders for as long as possible because of Guatemala’s dire economy. While participants described the period of prolonged family separation as different than earlier phases of separation, some of the emotions and behaviors described in initial and long-term separation phases were present in narratives about prolonged family separation. However, the influence of time on transnational family relationships was more prominent in descriptions of prolonged separation.

U.S.-based migrant parents expressed that even though they had stayed in the U.S. for many years, and longer than they had planned, they maintained a commitment to their children in Guatemala. With tears in her eyes, Julia (Family 1) explained:

Todo tiempo mucho gente me dice no tu, talvez, ya no te acuerda de tus hijos porque ya tiene casi ocho años y entonces tal vez de esas ocho años terminó todo. No es eso. Yo no, nunca por los ocho años, ni por los diez, quince años me quita eso, porque mientras que yo no los veo en personal, no me vaya quitar eso porque yo siempre me recuerde que yo tengo dos hijos allá.

All the time a lot of people tell me you are already going to forget your children because I have already been here for eight years and maybe these eight years will
end and all but it’s not like this I, whether it’s ten years or 15 years, I will never give up, even though I am not seeing them physically, I am not going to quit because I always remember that I have two children over there.

Julia expressed in this narrative how migrant parents’ physical separations from their children in origin countries are at times criticized by others, and that this can influence parents’ expressions and/or feelings of guilt for migrating and remaining separated from them. Important to note is that while Julia expressed sentiments of guilt, she also emphatically described the commitment she maintained and will reportedly always maintain to her children in Guatemala. It’s possible that Julia’s narrative was sparked by communicating with her children in Guatemala, and the experience of being asked by them when she and her husband would be returning to Guatemala. All of the Guatemala-based adolescents in this study reportedly asked these questions to their U.S.-based migrant parents at some point during their prolonged family separation experiences.

As Marlon (Family 6) said:

> Ellos me dicen en cuantos años vas regresar me dicen. Por ahora no sé, pero más o menos dos o tres años hasta llego así. ‘Quiero conocerte,’ me dijo. Pero te conozco les dije. ‘Solo de la foto no es igual si vas estar con nostros me dicen.’”

They tell me “in how many years are you going to return?” But now I don’t know, more or less in two or three years. “I want to get to know you,” they tell me. But you do know me, I say. “Only from a photo isn’t the same as if you were with us,” they say to me.”

As adolescents develop and continue to ask their U.S.-based migrant parents when they are returning, the question is often accompanied by expressions of sadness and frustration at their parents for remaining in the U.S. for longer than was expected. Almost every migrant parent reported as Julia (Family 1) did, that “todo los años, digamos el otro año [regresarémos],” “all the years we say next year [we will return].” Julia (Family 1) confessed that in October 2011 her daughter Deborah recently gave her an ultimatum. “Si
tu vienes esta bien si no me voy,” “If you are coming that’s good but if not I am going to
go [to the U.S.].”

When reflecting on why her daughter had begun to give ultimatums, Julia added
“Están aguantaba muchas años y tal vez no vale la pena esperar-están creciendo y
entiendo que estan esperando. Ella me dijo que tiene que fijar la fecha cuando estas
regresando o me voy a los EEUU,” “They have endured many years and maybe [they
think] it’s not worth the trouble to wait- they are growing and I understand they are
waiting. She told me you have to set a date when you are returning or I am going to the
U.S.”

While Deborah’s conversation with her mother is representative of the content of
the cross-border conversations teens in Guatemala seem to have with their U.S.-based
migrant parents, Deborah and her brother Ben are the only adolescents in this study
whose parent recently adjusted her status from an unauthorized migrant and asylum
seeker to a lawful permanent resident. Deborah no longer has to wait for her parents to
return to Guatemala to see them again as she and her brother will be able to “legally”
move to the U.S. in the near future. Now that Deborah will be able to join her parents in
the U.S., she wants to remain in Guatemala.

Like Deborah and other adolescents in this study, Guatemala-based caregiver
Mani also voiced his disappointment that his mother Daniela has remained in the U.S. for
10 years. He explained:

Ah, también triste porque pensando que cuatro o tres años iba a ser y una espera
verdad, y después de que uno le revise que no se puede. También siempre uno
tiene la tristeza, verdad? No sabe cuando va a venir pero no se verdad de
siempre…siempre tristeza porque tal vez no van a venir o solamente que pase
algo así como eso con la migración o solo así tal vez. Pero así, no quiero, pero de
It’s also sad because thinking in four or three years she is going to be here and one is waiting right and after one realizes that she is not going to be able to. Always one had this sadness, right? I don’t know when she is going to come, but I don’t know really, always, always this sadness because maybe she isn’t going to come or only if something happened over there like with ICE, this is something different. Only like this. But like this, I don’t what, of her own will and if she is able to come that’s good, yes. But like this, if they arrest her, I wouldn’t want this.

Mani’s emotions are similar to those of other adolescents and caregivers in this study. While they want their U.S.-based migrant relatives to return and recognize that deportation is one way through which their relatives could return to Guatemala, they hope and pray (e.g., Marina, Family 8) that their relatives are not detained or deported. Caregivers and adolescents in Guatemala note, nonetheless, missing the parental migrants as well as “dudas,” “doubts,” about when and if they will return. Most, however, also recognize that U.S.-based migrant parents would not be able to continue supporting them if they returned to Guatemala. For these reasons, half of the adolescents in this study noted that despite their sadness and losses from having their parents in the U.S., they preferred “estén allí y que nos mandan,” “them to be there and send us things.”

Finally, during prolonged separation periods several families responded to the emotional and financial challenges of being involved in transnational relationships for as many as 11 years by bringing their Guatemala-based teens to the U.S. M’caela’s (Family 9) nuclear family is no longer a transnational as she now lives with her parents in the U.S. and her two U.S.-based siblings, after transnationally communicating with these relatives for over a decade. M’caela now has to stay in touch through the phone with her grandmother, Katy, who raised her, and her close cousin who is M’caela’s same age and with whom she grew up and shared everything for nearly a decade. While Nina (Family
3) has now begun transnationally communicating with her mother and sister who remain in Guatemala after living with them for 15 years of her life, she and her father Mauricio will soon live under the same roof, as they did 11 years ago. And 15-year old Jessica (Family 3), who joined her mother, Julianna, in the U.S. in December 2011, is now forced to communicate with her sister, Yesenia, and her grandparents, Veronica and Teodor, through the phone and other cross-border communication networks. Jessica has been living with her mother, her mother’s new husband, and her two half-sisters who are U.S. citizens for the past year. Finally, Julia and Miguel (Family 1) have filed the paperwork for their children to legally reunite with them in the U.S. Whether adolescents Ben and Deborah will make the journey to the U.S. and leave their grandmother Paula, with whom they have lived their entire lives, is yet to be seen.

**Conclusion.** Findings reviewed here showed that family separation and especially prolonged family separation takes its toll on the family, despite the transnational family strategies parents, children, and caregivers utilize to maintain ties. It also revealed that families view the only tenable solution to prolonged family separation as arranging for additional young family members to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Despite the serious risks migrants encounter *en camino* (en route) to the United States and continue to encounter once arriving and taking on a liminal legal status, one third of the transnational Maya K’iche’ families in this study planned for their teenage daughters to make the journey. Other families reported that they would do the same if they could afford the cost.

The strategy that families used of reconfiguring the transnational family suggests that while cross-border communication, remittances and consejos ease the difficulties of family separation across space and over time, there is no equivalent to being physically
present in the lives of one’s children or parents. Findings from this study show how the significant challenges in transnational family relationships are connected to U.S. immigration and deportation policies and the indefinite limited mobility that families experience because of them. The strains to transnational family relationships over time could potentially be mitigated by a comprehensive immigration reform that takes transnational families into account and allows them to reunite more easily, reducing the long and difficult periods of family separation, as is discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation. Finally, the findings reviewed here show that in response to socio-legal and other barriers, the transnational family is constantly changing and reorganizing itself. The transnational family is, thus, a system that defies expectations of families as a source of contention and instability but rather highlights how families in the 21st century are adaptive and resilient.
Chapter 4: Discussion

There are currently more than 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. who frequently experience fear and threats because of the Obama administration’s increased detention and deportation of migrants who are present without authorization. Research has shown that migrants, and particularly, Latino migrants, who are in the U.S. with authorization also experience fear and threats related to detention and deportation, albeit, to a lesser extent that undocumented migrants in the U.S. (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). This fear may be reasonable given the state-level enforcement policies in states such as Arizona that enable authority figures to arrest anyone they “suspect” of being present without authorization (see, Morse et al., 2012). Undocumented migrants in the U.S. in particular may have good reason to fear authority figures in the U.S. because as our immigration policies currently stand, there are few avenues available to them for legalizing their immigration statuses or finding relief from deportation if arrested by ICE, regardless of how long they and/or other family members have been in the U.S (Kanstroom, 2007). Approximately a quarter of the nearly 200,000 migrants expelled from the U.S. during the first half of 2011, for example, had U.S.-citizen children living in the U.S. when they were deported (Wessler, 2011).

Despite the significant funding and energy that the U.S. government has put into deterring undocumented migration by increasing the rate of detention and deportation and heightening border security over the last several years, from September 2010-September 2011, approximately 327, 577 migrants were arrested when trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border “illegally” (Miroff & Booth, 2011). This number does not include the migrants who made it into the U.S. surreptitiously or overstayed their visas. While this
number is dramatically smaller than in past years (1.6 million migrants were arrested at the border in 2000, Miroff & Booth, 2011), it shows that undocumented migrants are still attempting to enter the U.S. “illegally” in spite of the risks they face at the border and once in the U.S.

The significant population of undocumented migrants in the U.S., who often are parts of mixed-status families and cross-border transnational networks between the U.S. and origin countries, suggests failures in our immigration system, including policies enabling migrants to enter the U.S. “legally” and those intended to prevent unauthorized migration. Both citizens and migrants who support increased rights for undocumented migrants and pathways for legalizing their statuses in the U.S., and those who call for more federal spending on deportations and increased security along the U.S.-Mexico border, have acknowledged this failure (Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Massey & Sánchez, 2009). While those on different sides of the immigration debate agree that our immigration system is broken, the U.S. government is experiencing political gridlock in attempting to “fix” this system, and a tenable, comprehensive immigration reform bill has yet to be announced (Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Massey & Sánchez, 2009;).

Until some type of comprehensive immigration reform is passed, the more than 11 million undocumented migrants who have settled in cities and states throughout the U.S. are forced to live in the “shadows” to avoid authority figures and institutions that may increase their chances of being detained and deported (Lykes et al., 2011; Massey, 2007; Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Massey & Sánchez, 2009). In states like Alabama and Arizona, where punitive state legislation has increased racial profiling and human rights violations for “legal” and “illegal” migrants alike, migrants are highly susceptible to
psychosocial problems related to this volatile sociopolitical climate (see American Civil Liberties Union, 2012).

I developed this dissertation as one response to this difficult sociopolitical climate. I wanted to contribute to debates about comprehensive immigration reform by showing how punitive immigration policies may affect undocumented migrants in the U.S., their family members in the U.S., and their family members in origin countries (Brabeck et al., 2011). I believed that the research would show the experiences and challenges of undocumented migrants in the U.S. are felt throughout their family systems extending beyond the United States (Dreby, 2010).

To explore this belief and contribute to knowledge about the “family project of immigration” as it is experienced in the 21st century, with detention and deportation rates on the rise in the U.S. and internationally, I conducted this research with families that are both transnational and mixed-status and spread out across the U.S. and the global south (Nessel, 2008; Schmalzbauer, 2004). I specifically chose to conduct and analyze interviews with Maya K´iche´ families which include undocumented migrant parents in the U.S. and children and other relatives in Guatemala to broaden the immigration debate so that it not only considered experiences of undocumented migrants in the U.S. and their U.S.-citizen children, but also the experiences and perspectives of their relatives in origin countries (Brabeck et al., 2011; Dreby, 2010; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).

Scholars from different disciplines have vocalized their concerns for mixed-status families in the U.S., arguing that the rights of U.S.-citizen children are violated when their parents are detained and deported (e.g., Sullivan, 2011; Thronson, 2010, 2006, 2005). Drawing from child welfare and family law, legal scholar David Thronson has
argued that the U.S. government, in its efforts to penalize their undocumented parents, has penalized U.S.-citizen children in mixed-status families and denied them certain family rights that are supposedly guaranteed by U.S. law (Thronson, 2006, 2005). Developmental psychologist Hirokazu Yoshikawa (2011) has similarly contributed to immigration debates that encourage pathways for legalizing undocumented parents in the U.S for the sake of the healthy development of their U.S.-citizen children. His research has documented how the cognitive development of U.S.-citizen children who are part of mixed-status families is affected by their parents’ experiences of liminal legality that result from being undocumented in the U.S. In his research with hundreds of migrant families in New York, Yoshikawa (2011) found children’s cognitive outcomes, such as early language, motor, and perceptual skills, differed depending on whether they had documented or undocumented migrant parents. The children in this research were performing at lower levels than their peers as early as age two if their parents were undocumented migrants. Yoshikawa found that these outcomes were related to the more significant economic challenges and psychological distress experienced by undocumented parents in the U.S., compared to “legal” migrants. Such stress influences the way these parents interact with their U.S.-citizen children.

Research with mixed-status families and U.S.-citizen children has significantly enhanced knowledge about the deleterious effects of immigration and deportation policies on children and families in the U.S. (e.g., Bibler Coutin, 2000, 2007; Brabeck et al., 2011; Chaudry et al., 2011; Kanstroom, 2007). But this research has insufficiently explained how such policies and practices influence migrants’ relatives in origin countries who depend on family members in the U.S. for survival. Another rarely studied
phenomenon is the experiences of mixed-status families in the U.S. that are also transnational families and include U.S.-citizen children and children in migrants’ origin countries (exceptions are Dreby, 2010; Menjívar, 2002; McKenzie & Menjívar, 2011; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009; Schmalzbauer, 2004, 2005). This dissertation argues that if effective and comprehensive changes are going to be made to our immigration policies, we must first develop holistic understandings of the realities in which non-citizens in the U.S. and their families are living.

Because recent research with transnational families divided across the global south and the U.S. suggests they experience family separation for longer periods of time than in the past, I explored how extended or prolonged family separation influenced participants’ experiences in their families and within different sets of relationships in their families (e.g., Dreby & Stutz, 2012; Massey, 2007, Parrenãs, 2005). It is important to note that every participant family in this dissertation had experienced separation—and specifically, separation between U.S.-based migrant parents and their Guatemala-based children—for close to a decade. Through interviews with these participant families and the analysis of interviews, this research focused on two broad areas of transnational life and explored:

1. What are some of the family processes in which undocumented Maya K’iche’ parent(s) based in the U.S., their children in Guatemala, and their children’s caregivers in Guatemala engage to maintain ties across borders and during varying periods of separation?

2. How do members of transnational, mixed-status families understand and make meaning of family separations and strains vis-à-vis socio-legal factors (i.e.,
undocumented status, deportation practices, limited mobility between U.S. and origin nations, limited work opportunities, among others)?

These particular research questions were developed iteratively with the goal of developing a theory that articulated a central process that explained how multiple members of transnational, mixed-status families maintain ties and relationships despite extended physical separations and ongoing and increasing threats.

To answer the research questions, I interviewed individual participants who were part of transnational and mixed-status families and analyzed interviews following a combination of Charmaz’s (2006) and Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) guides for grounded theory research. The grounded theory developed from this dissertation, entitled “being present when forced to be absent,” explains how multiple members of transnational, mixed-status families maintain relationships across borders, the strains they experience in their relationships related to U.S. and Guatemala contexts, as well as changes in the above, in each individual and in their relationships as separations extend.

Outline

In the succeeding sections of this chapter, I review findings that contributed to generating this middle-range theory and discuss the ways in which these findings can inform future research. In the first section, I include a description of the framework that guided this dissertation and how it relates to the theory I developed in this study. I then summarize some of the important findings related to the framework and theory, and address the question of “fit” between the integrated framework and the topic under investigation. After reviewing main findings, I discuss some of the strengths and limitations of this two-year study. Throughout the succeeding sections, I consider
findings in light of previous research that has been conducted with transnational and mixed-status families. I conclude this chapter with recommendations for future research and with a summary of the study’s implications for comprehensive immigration reform. Throughout this discussion, I highlight the strengths I identified, as well as the strengths participants identified about their transnational, mixed-status families to reflect an appreciation for the families’ resilience and adaptiveness.

I. Guiding Framework and Theory Development

This dissertation was guided by an integrated theoretical framework that enabled me to attend to the individual developmental and contextual factors (i.e., socioeconomic, sociopolitical/socio-legal) in participants’ lives that potentially play a role in their experiences within their families and in the ways in which participants engage in family relationships across borders and over time. This framework complemented the grounded theory method, which is rooted in symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2006). The method aids researchers in the analysis of data so they can focus on actions and interactions between participants and between participants and the structural forces in their lives, while exploring how participants’ meanings influence actions and interactions (Smith et al., 2009). I specifically integrated socio-legal, transnational, and family systems theories to guide the design of this research and the analysis process. This allowed me to explore and understand the diverse experiences and perspectives of children, caregivers, and parents who are part of complicated transnational and mixed-status family systems, and transnational contexts across the U.S. and Guatemala.

I drew from socio-legal theory and research to better understand the challenges of undocumented status and constructed states of “illegality” and how these were
experienced by U.S.-based participants and within their families (De Genova, 2002). By exploring how participants understood the role of “illegality” and immigration and deportation policies and practices in their lives, I was able to interrogate how these forces impact the life experiences of migrants in the U.S. who cross the border without authorization as well as the lives of their children and other relatives who are physically distant from them. In this way, I contributed to research about the far-reaching consequences and power of punitive U.S. and international policies and the “long arm” of immigration law specifically (Menjívar, 2012, p. 303).

I drew from family systems and transnational theory to be able to explore specific interactions between family members in transnational, mixed-status families and how characteristics of one family member influenced his or her interactions with other family members, even if these family members were living in two different nations. I had hoped to explore sibling and spousal sub-systems (Minuchin, 1985) in more depth in this study, but sample limitations, as discussed above and below, prevented me from doing this.

Despite several limitations, this dissertation had a wider scope than much of the contemporary research conducted to contribute to immigration reform that focuses on how U.S.-based parents’ undocumented statuses impact their U.S.-citizen children (e.g., Yoshikawa, 2011). Interviews with differently situated family members across nine participant families yielded significant information about family experiences within diverse, transnational, mixed-status Maya K´iche´ families. This research also generated valuable knowledge about dyadic relationships within these families, and about how these relationships may be influenced by and influence immigration and deportation systems. Some of these findings are reviewed below.
Being present when *forced to be absent*. Through analyzing data using the sequential coding procedure described in Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theory guides, NVivo9 software, memo writing and triangulation, I was able to construct a middle-range theory from the data that explained the main processes engaged within participant families and by different members of participant families to enable family members to develop and maintain relationships, despite families being divided across the U.S. and Guatemala for significant periods of time. Based on previous research, I focused on experiences of U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based caregivers, and Guatemala-based children in these families to theorize about how these particular family members contribute to the functioning of transnational, mixed-status families (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Moran-Taylor, 2008; Parreñas, 2005; Pottinger, 2005). The theory of “being present when *forced to be absent*” identifies how all participants described their family separation experiences as *forced* in some way by aspects of their transnational contexts across the U.S. and Guatemala. This theory also identifies how differently situated family members engaged in cross-border communication, remittances, and consejos (life advice) to maintain contact and some form of a “presence” in the lives of their relatives from whom they were physically separated. While much of the transnational literature identifies communication and remittances as practically and symbolically important to the maintenance of transnational parent-child bonds (e.g., Artico, 2003; Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Dreby, 2010; Horton, 2009, among others), this research has not identified consejos as a particularly important process utilized within transnational relationships.

The analysis of data showed that, while multiple family members are engaged in
the process of “being present when forced to be absent” through utilizing these cross-border strategies, the clearest result of this process is that undocumented, U.S.-based migrant parents believe they are able to be present in some way in the lives of the children they left in Guatemala. Across families, the majority of Guatemala-based youth seemed to accept their parents’ practical and symbolic presences in their lives most of the time, and some even sought this out by calling or texting them from Guatemala, requesting remittances, and seeking consejos from them. But some youth reject their parents’ attempts to be present in their lives by rejecting their phone calls and/or consejos.

The analysis of data suggested that Julio, in Family 6, was the most resistant to his parents’ attempts to be present in his life, although there were other examples of Guatemala-based youth disengaging from cross-border communication processes at times. Some youth, such as Leopold in Family 7 and Deborah in Family 1, reported using cross-border strategies wherein they voiced disapproval of their parents’ limited economic presences in their lives and prolonged physical absences, but they still welcomed and looked forward to communicating with their U.S.-based parents on a regular basis. While the finding that youth in origin countries sometimes disengage from communication with their parents across borders or react ambivalently to parents’ constant phone calls has been supported in previous research with other transnational populations (e.g., Madianou & Miller, 2011), the findings from this research that youth also use cross-border communication to actively voice disapproval to their migrant parents’ is infrequently recognized in the literature.

**Strains in transnational, mixed-status families.** As interviewees revealed the
multiple contextual and person-level strains experienced within their families and within
the relationships of which they were a part, they also claimed that their transnational,
mixed-status families were functioning and, in some cases, thriving. The analysis of
interviews made clear, however, that strains affected not only the relationships between
Guatemala-based children and U.S.-based migrant parents, or between Guatemala-based
children and their Guatemala-based caregivers, but also the abilities (and willingness) of
differently situated family members to utilize cross-border strategies of communication,
remittances, and consejos (life advice) to maintain ties across borders, as is depicted in
Figure 1.

*Socioeconomic strains.* As both U.S.-based and Guatemala-based relatives in this
study, such as Carlos (Family 4) and Mauricio (Family 3) pointed out, the slow
development of international communication technologies in Guatemala and the
continual lack of *trabajo fijo* (steady work) in the U.S. for undocumented migrants,
prevents families from engaging in steady or constant cross-border communication. This
experience was particularly common for participant families whose migrant relatives
journeyed to the U.S. approximately a decade ago. The lack of steady work in the U.S. as
well as the lack of cell phone towers in Guatemala at that time were related to macro-
level socioeconomic conditions in the U.S. and Guatemala. Important to note is that the
simultaneous socioeconomic challenges experienced during migration and family
separation in Guatemala and the U.S. by members of transnational families were
identified in this research because of the transnational methodology employed in this
study.

As family members in Guatemala and the U.S. explained, Maya in Guatemala
now have cellular phones readily available to them but the current U.S. recession in
addition to the Obama administration’s increased enforcement of employer sanctions for
the hiring of undocumented laborers, continue to influence the availability of steady,
under-the-table work for undocumented migrants, and thereby, the resources available for
the cross-border communication processes in which they engage. Raquel (Family 7), for
example, began her interview in February 2011 explaining:

Ellos a veces, también están triste por él, también así como le digo, que ahorita no
puede hablar por teléfono con él, con el ahorita no he hablado, no tiene teléfono
también. “Vos tratas la manera de arreglar el teléfono,” le dije, y el me dice que
“ve que gasto también, por eso también ya con cincuenta dólares, mejor con
cincuenta dólares mejor manda por su gasto también,” me dice el. Antes había
mucho trabajo allá. En cambio ahora no hay trabajo, ni aquí ni alla. Allá hay
muchos sin trabajo también.

They are sometimes sad, they are sad for him, this is also because, like I said,
now they aren’t able to speak on the telephone with him, we aren’t speaking,
he doesn’t have a telephone. You have to find a way to have a phone, I said [to
my husband], and he told me, “look, it’s also an expense to have a phone,
because of this it’s better to send the 50 dollars and with this 50 dollars I will send
it for your expenses,” he tells me. Before there was a lot of work over there. In
contrast, now there isn’t work here or over there. Over there [in the U.S.] there are
a lot of people without work.

Raquel’s narrative supports the finding that socioeconomic factors in the U.S.,
such as the lack of work for undocumented migrants, strain transnational spousal and
transnational father-child relationships by limiting migrants’ abilities to pay for cell
phones and communicate across borders on a regular basis. As Cesar, Raquel’s husband,
explained to her, it made more sense for them to forego access to communication
technologies for the sake of having more money to pay for expenses in Guatemala. In this
way, Cesar adapted to a contextual socioeconomic (and socio-legal) strain in the U.S.,
with the goal of being able to offer more financial support to his family in Guatemala. In
other words, Cesar chose to engage more substantively in the cross-border process of
sending remittances than in communicating. This decision, while made for the sake of his family in Guatemala, has had negative repercussions in Cesar’s cross-border family relationships and in the daily experiences of Cesar’s family members in Guatemala, who are saddened by the limited communication they currently have with him.

**Developmental and interpersonal changes.** In addition to these socioeconomic strains and the emotional consequences they have for families, time and developmental change influenced cross-border relationships in the transnational, mixed-status families (see Figure 1). As separation and migration experiences transition from two to five to ten years for some families, the Guatemala-based children in these families transition from early to middle childhood to adolescence. These developmental changes are reflected in the relationships and incidences of conflict within relationships that different family members describe in their interviews. The descriptions of conflict within participant families also suggest that sub-systems within participant transnational, mixed-status families are experiencing strains related to simultaneous developmental changes in, for example, the adolescents and the parents or caregivers with whom they interact (Cook, 2001).

**Interpersonal conflicts in participant Mayan families.** As children in Guatemala age from middle-childhood to adolescence, some of their caregivers are aging from being young grandparents to becoming elderly grandparents who experience physical ailments and, possibly, limits in their abilities to discipline and meet the needs of their grandchildren (i.e., Family 1 and Family 6). These relationships are challenged by these developmental changes, and what family systems research refers to as interpersonal influences (Cook, 2001). The same pattern of change is likely occurring within
relationships between U.S.-based migrant parents and their Guatemala-based children.

It is likely that as parents in the U.S. experienced more years apart from their Guatemala-based children, and, thus, continued to miss out on their children’s development (see Mauricio, Family 3), they were inclined to put more energy into being present in their children’s lives by calling them frequently and trying to offer consejos on the phone. While this experience may be occurring for parents, Guatemala-based children may simultaneously be seeking more independence from their parents, and, as is the case with Julio (Family 6) and Deborah (Family 1), experiencing and acting out feelings of anger and/or disappointment at their migrant parents for remaining in the U.S. In such cases, parents’ efforts to maintain a presence and some control in their children’s lives, despite their physical absences, may be ill received or rejected by their adolescent children.

As undocumented migrant parents noted in this study, (i.e., Miguel and Julia in Family 1 and Marlon, Family 7) their Guatemala-based children do not always accept their efforts to communicate with or offer consejos to them from afar. When this occurs, parents are reminded of the limited power they have in their cross-border relationships and in their Guatemala-based children’s lives (Dreby, 2010; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Medianou & Miller, 2011). When adolescents reject their parents’ attempts to be present, it also becomes clear that, despite the potential emotional benefits children experience when they choose to communicate with their U.S.-based migrant parents and receive remittances and consejos from them, children do not view engaging in cross-border family processes with their parents as a sufficient substitute for having one’s parents physically present. This finding among Mayan families in this study is important, as it
suggests that the adolescents and children in these families experience sentiments of loss and sadness similar to those experienced by children and adolescents in countries such as Mexico and the Philippines (see, Dreby, 2010; Parreñas, 2005). Specifically, findings from this study support previous research that suggests children left behind during parental migration experience emotional anguish because of their parents’ physical absences, despite engaging in cross-border communication and remittance processes with them on a regular basis (see, Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Dreby, 2010; Madianou & Miller, 2011).

The findings in this study about emotional challenges and interpersonal conflicts reportedly experienced during transnational cross-border processes also contributes to and enhances the significant body of research about interpersonal conflict and family dysfunction experienced when adolescents migrate to the U.S. and reunify with the migrant parents from whom they were previously separated (e.g., Artico, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). Specifically, findings about conflicts and strains experienced in relationships between U.S.-based migrant parents and their Guatemala-based adolescents during cross-border communication and consejos processes suggest that before adolescents migrate to the U.S. to reunify with family, the seeds are planted for these adolescents and their U.S.-based relatives to experience strain and conflict once living under the same roof in the U.S.

In research with reunified families, which include adolescents who migrated to the U.S. to reunite with their migrant parents, psychologists have noted: “many reunified families experience tensions, conflicts, and adjustment difficulties particularly during the phase of adolescent development” (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010, p. 226). In this
dissertation, it was revealed that families who remained physically separated across borders for significant periods of time were also experiencing tensions, conflicts and adjustment difficulties that appeared to be related to adolescent development. Findings from this study suggest that some of the migrant family conflicts to which psychologists in the U.S. draw attention in research, and for which, they argue, migrant families in the U.S. should seek psychological treatment and therapy (i.e., Artico, 2003; Falicov, 2007), are rooted in and experienced during migration, and potentially, pre-migration experiences.

In addition to reports by U.S.-based migrant parents and Guatemala-based caregivers of the difficult emotions and “rebellious” behaviors they observed in the adolescents in their families, participant youth themselves discussed experiencing sadness in response to their parents’ migrations and physical absences from their lives. There was significant variation, however, among the youth participants in this study in the emotions they described across the duration of this study, and in terms of the emotions they described experiencing when they were younger and, thus, during different phases of the family separation experience. Participant youth also varied in terms of their personal characteristics, such as age and gender, and in terms of whether their mother, father, or both parents were based in the U.S. These differences are likely related to youth reacting differently to parents’ efforts to be present, even though the vast majority accepted parents’ efforts in this regard.

The significant variation among participant families is evidenced in the data presented by families and particularly because Guatemala-based adolescents from a third of participant families crossed the U.S.-Mexico border “illegally” and reunited with
undocumented migrant parent(s) in the U.S. These families utilized the strategy of *reconfiguring the transnational family*, with the result that several young girls in this study exchanged their proximal relationships with caregivers, siblings, cousins, and other relatives in Guatemala for the chance to engage in proximal relationships with the undocumented migrant parent(s) from whom they had been separated. When families made the decision for adolescent girls in their families to migrate to the U.S. without authorization, these girls also became undocumented and “illegal” migrants in the U.S. for a period of time.

*Reconfiguring the transnational family.* The fact that several families in this dissertation *chose* to bring an additional young relative to the U.S. “illegally” complicated the finding that socioeconomic and social-legal factors *force* separation, and at times, prolonged separation, for transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families. How can participant families, and multiple members of participant families, view family separation as an unavoidable consequence of socioeconomic conditions in Guatemala and socio-legal and sociopolitical forces in the U.S., while being able to alter the transnational configuration of families by planning for, and in several cases, carrying out family reunification?

The answer to this question lies in additional findings related to between-family and between-participant differences and the role of time in migration and separation experiences. It could also be explained using Julianna’s (Family 2) words. Julianna made arrangements for her eldest daughter, Jessica, to migrate “illegally” to the U.S. reportedly because of the sadness both Julianna and Jessica experienced from being separated, and because Jessica was abused by a caregiver with whom she, her sister Yesenia and
grandparents lived. While Julianna and Jessica now live together in the U.S., along with Julianna’s second husband and Jessica’s two-half sisters, Jessica’s younger sister Yesenia remains in Guatemala with the grandparents who raised Jessica and Yesenia. When interviewing Yesenia in February 2011 about whether she desired to migrate to the U.S. in the future to join her mother and sisters, Yesenia explained that she did not, despite missing both of them. Yesenia, similar to other “children left behind,” but unlike her sister Jessica reported that she was attached to her grandparents and did not want to exchange her closeness with them for the chance to be physically close to her mother, who had been physically absent from her life for almost a decade. It’s likely that this attachment experience is related to the fact that when Julianna migrated, Jessica was already seven years old and likely had recorded memories of her mother, while Yesenia was only four. This possible finding suggests that children experience the migration of parents differently depending on their age at the time of migration. It also suggests that the attachments children in origin countries maintain or develop to their migrant parents will vary based on the child’s age and order in the family. Moreover, it reflects that children left behind in origin countries may have loyalties to their caregiver-grandparents, especially if these children are the only children being cared for by their grandparents.

Despite Yesenia’s lack of interest in migrating to the U.S., her mother, Julianna, expressed feeling that Yesenia should join her, and now Jessica, in the U.S. during a visit in March 2011. During the visit to Julianna’s home, I discussed my recent trip to Guatemala and visit with her family there, and how happy Yesenia seemed despite missing her mother and sister. I believed these words would give Julianna some peace of mind about her daughter in Guatemala. Julianna, to my surprise, responded with bursting
into tears, saying that, “todas mis hijas deben estar conmigo,” “all of my children should be with me.” I was reminded at that moment of how Yesenia also cried as she described being happy that her mother and sister were in the U.S., adding that her mother sends her things.

In addition to suggesting how relationships between migrant parents and their children in origin countries, in the same transnational family, may differ, Julianna and Yesenia’s narratives taught me that families do view their initial separation as “necessary” and forced by socioeconomic conditions in Guatemala. The data from these families’ members also suggested, however, that the issue of whether families can transgress systems to resolve strains related to prolonged family separation and plan for family reunification is very complicated.

Attachments in transnational, mixed-status families. As migrant parents remain in the U.S. for longer periods of time, their children in origin countries remain in the care of grandparents, siblings and other relatives with whom they develop attachments. This has been supported in much of the previous research with transnational families from the global south (e.g., Artico, 2003; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). This study found, however, that these emotional and relationship experiences may, together, prevent children in Guatemala from migrating to the U.S. to be with parents, even if parents believe they can arrange for children to cross the U.S.-Mexico border “illegally” and even if children in origin countries miss and cry for their parents.

Cristina (Family 6) explained (as mentioned above), that while she may have wanted to bring her children to the U.S. in past years, she realized she could not do it, because it would be too sad for her mother, who has cared for her children in Guatemala
for the last 10 years. She, unlike most Mayan grandmothers, has very few children and grandchildren. When asked about her plans to reunify with her children, Cristina said:

Y solo gana dos cientos tres cientos y nosotros queremos a traer pero…después a veces llega a mi mente que nosotros queremos a traer, si yo voy a traer mis hijos, mi mama se va morir. Se pone triste, por eso no podemos y mi mamá no quiere y mis hijos no quieren venir también. Nosotros queremos a traer pero al dinero no ajusto, no ajusto y una vez le dije a mi mamá y mi mamá dice que no quiere para ellos ir porque si va mis hijos yo me pone llorar y mi pone triste. Y yo no tengo mas hermanas tengo un hermano pero el no tiene mujer.

I only earn two hundred, three hundred [dollars] and we want to bring [my children] but…well after this one time that I had this idea that we want to bring them and that I am going to bring my children, I realized if I do it my mother would die. She would be sad, for this reason we are not able to and my mother doesn’t want us to, and my children don’t want to either. We want to bring them but the money we have saved is not enough, well we did save it and one time I told my mother and my mother said, “I don’t want it, for them to leave, because if my children are leaving I will cry and be very sad.” I don’t have a lot of siblings, I have one brother but he is not married.”

Cristina explained that she could not send for her children because of the attachment her mother has to her children. This finding suggests that the emotional ties children in origin countries develop to the caregivers with whom they grow up, as well as the attachments caregivers themselves develop to the children in their care can become obstacles in the family’s plans for reunification. Later in the interview, Cristina also reported that as the attachment her mother, Sabina, had to her grandchildren, (Cristina’s children) strengthened over time, her children also became more attached to their grandmother, and the emotional bond they felt toward Cristina lessened. This also appeared to occur as this family’s separation experience transitioned from initial to long-term.
In a powerful narrative, unparalleled by those presented by other parents, Cristina explained the emotional consequence of her physical absence on the parent-child bond she strives to maintain with her children from the U.S. Cristina said:

Ellos ya tienen confianza en mi mamá. Creo que a mi ya no tienen mucho confianza. Ya no tienen mucha, como una, a veces me llaman, como, dice como una hermana, dice. Si una hermana para ellos dice porque yo vive aquí. Mas que ellos quiero mucho, mas es mi mamá. Ahora yo estoy tratando comenzar estar cerca ahora ya no están manteniendo ya...ahora si estan un poquito mejor que antes, antes siempre me dicen mi nombre cuando hablamos pero ahora no. Porque mi mamá estan diciendo que yo es tu mama y ella es su abuela. Antes como esta poquito, ellos no entienden todavía, pero ahora si entiendo.

They trust my mother. I think that that don’t really trust me a lot. They don’t have a lot [of trust] because sometimes they think of me as a sister, they say. Yeah a sister for them they say because I live here. They love my mother a lot more. Now I am trying to begin to be close but they aren’t maintaining [the bond], although now it’s a bit better than before. Before they always would call me by my name when we spoke, but not now. Because my mother is telling them that I am their mother and she is their grandmother. Before, because they were little, they didn’t yet understand but now they understand.

When asked if it was hard for Cristina when she realized that her children felt closer to their grandmother than to her, Cristina explained:

Si. Dije yo creo que yo ya perdi mis hijos dije yo. No se que yo voy hacer. Pero mi mama dijo que tuvo su mamá y su papá allá. Ahora ya sabemos que estamos aquí. Nosotros somos el papá y la mamá.

Yeah. I said I think I lost my children, I said. I don’t know what I am going to do. But my mother told them “your mother and father are in the U.S.” Now they know we are here. That we are their father and mother.

Cristina is the only mother in this study who talked about “losing her children,” and the only parent who revealed that her children were emotionally more attached to their Guatemala-based caregivers than to their U.S.-based parents. But based on Cristina’s narrative and the reality that in every participant family, there were Guatemala-based children who were left with caregivers when they were four-years old or younger,
it’s possible that more youth in participant families had to learn about their parents’ migrations and understand the reasons for them before they could form bonds with their parents in the U.S. This task likely had profound socio-emotional consequences on children in Guatemala, and wielded significant influence on their interactions with parents through the phone and in other cross-border processes. These findings suggest that Guatemala-based caregivers, as with caregivers in Mexican transnational families (Dreby, 2010), prove vital to the development and maintenance of cross-border parent-child bonds in transnational, mixed-status families, as they have the task of explaining to the children in their care where their parents are and why they migrated, and reminding them of this throughout the family separation experience. They also suggest the complexities—and contradictions—in these intergenerational transnational ties.

*Agency in cross-border parent-child relationships.* Once children are old enough to understand, as Miguel (Family 1) and Cristina (Family 6) explained, they seem to have agency in choosing how to engage in or disengage from transnational relationships. Saira (Family 6) and Yesenia (Family 2) suggested they had no intention of migrating to the U.S. “illegally,” despite both having parents who desired family reunification. In contrast, Leopold (Family 7) was eager to join his father in the U.S. to help his little siblings in Guatemala. While Leopold wanted to migrate, in February 2011, his parents explained in interviews that they were not supporting his migration. As of February 2012, Leopold was still studying in Guatemala, as his parents had desired. This finding confirms that most teenagers in this study could not make the journey to the U.S. without the approval and financial backing of family relatives. Nina (Family 3), however, migrated to the U.S. with support from her U.S.-based father, even though her mother in Guatemala was
against the idea. Nina’s experience does not seem to be common for adolescents from Guatemala or for adolescents from other countries in the global south, who more commonly migrate to the U.S. to reunify with their migrant mothers (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

It’s possible that Nina’s migration experience reflects that she is one of the only youth in this study whose U.S.-based migrant parent, her father Mauricio, reported sending several thousands of dollars home to her regularly (see page 171). Mauricio is also the only participant who discussed migrating to the U.S. initially “in search of the American Dream” (see page 232). Nina may have taken the initiative to migrate and leave her mother and sister in Guatemala because of similar ambitions and the lure of the U.S. that manifested through her cross-border contact with her father and as she learned of the opportunities her father was enjoying in the U.S. It may also demonstrate that Nina and her father have a particularly strong father-daughter relationship. Data is insufficient to draw strong conclusions from Nina's case but her decision is suggestive for future studies of transnational adolescent migrations. Specifically, her experience suggests that future research should explore whether adolescents’ decisions to migrate to the U.S. without authorization vary based on how their migrant parents in the U.S. are faring economically, or based on the transnational parent-child relationship in which they have participated during their parents’ physical absences.

Variation in views regarding reconfiguring the transnational family. The variation in youths’ desires to migrate to the U.S. and reunite with a parent or both parents there supports the previous finding that even within this small sample variation between individual and family characteristics and experiences is significant. This shows
that youth and other family members engaged in transnational, mixed-status relationships “resist facile generalizations” (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003, p. 19). This is the case even within the same ethno-linguistic migrant group, from the same geographic region, and within families who include children of similar ages. There also is significant variation in the views families have about transgressing sociopolitical systems and the constructions of “illegality” imposed on migrants who cross the border without authorization (De Genova, 2002). While some families believe they are able to challenge the sociopolitical forces that lock undocumented migrant parents into their statuses as “illegal” migrants and act on these beliefs, other families and participants, such as Raquel (Family 7), imply that nothing can be done about the contextual factors keeping relatives apart using the words “que se puede hacer?”, “what can one do?”

Families who believe they can transgress the sociopolitical systems and laws that keep families separated across borders arrange for their children to cross the border “illegally” years after their parents have settled in the U.S. and likely learned about the legal process undocumented youth have to go through to be able to remain in the U.S. Other families, in past years, challenged these systems by arranging for migrant fathers to travel back and forth between Guatemala and the U.S. without documents (i.e., Families 1, 6, and 7). And finally, Family 1 worked within these sociopolitical systems to challenge the construction of “illegality” by spending several years arranging for Julia to adjust her status from that of an undocumented migrant mother to an asylum seeker to an asylee. In several months, Guatemala-based children Deborah and Ben will have permission to “legally” immigrate and reunify with their parents and U.S.-citizen siblings in the U.S. Whether these teens will choose to exchange the proximity of their
relationship with their grandmother, Paula, and the many cousins who live only paces away from them in their village of Zacualpa for the chance to share a home in the U.S. with their parents and little siblings and, thus, alter the transnational configuration of their family, remains to be seen. In February 2012, in response to my question of whether he was excited about the prospect of joining his parents in the U.S., Ben said: “lo que yo quiero hacer es terminar mis estudios en Zacualpa,” “what I want to do is finish my studies in Zacualpa.”

II. Strengths and Limitations of Research

Capturing developmental and family changes. From spending two years traveling between the U.S. and Guatemala to conduct research with multiple members of transnational, mixed-status Mayan families, I have evidenced some level of interconnectedness in the lives of family members in transnational families, despite family members living thousands of miles apart for many years (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). I have also been able to document some of the significant changes in the experiences of individual participants, within the dyadic family relationships in which participants engage, and within family systems at the collective level.

Within Family 1, for example, during the course of this dissertation the mother went from being an undocumented migrant to an asylee, with dramatic consequences for her children and mother who remain in Guatemala. Additionally, over the two years of research for this dissertation, Family 1 had another child in the U.S. and the Guatemala-based children entered high school. These changes reportedly affected the U.S.-based migrant parents’ decisions about remaining in the U.S., their plans for bringing their Guatemala-based children to the U.S., and their Guatemala-based children’s desires to
reunite with the family in the U.S. and leave their relatives and social networks in Guatemala. Research has shown that, as children enter adolescence, they often become more dependent on their peer groups than their parents (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). This study found that these changes are likely occurring among the adolescents in this study, and contributing to adolescents, such as Ben, feeling resistant about leaving Guatemala to join family in the U.S.

This research documented many changes occurring within Family 1, in particular, and how these changes may be related to macro-level factors in Guatemala and the U.S. During the elections in Guatemala in fall 2011, for example, several Guatemala-based relatives in this family were reportedly caught up in some of the election violence (see Pachico, 2011), and one young relative was physically attacked and hospitalized. In the U.S. in the fall of 2011, two young migrant relatives who are cousins of Family 1 were arrested in a southern U.S. state when they were passengers in the car of a friend who was also an undocumented migrant and driving without a license. The parents in Family 1, Julia and Miguel, arranged for these cousins to move in with them while they were awaiting their cases in immigration court.

The additional major change in participant families occurred in the form of family structures being altered by adolescent girls in three families crossing the border “illegally” and reunifying with a parent or parents in the U.S. who they had not seen in approximately 10 years. In two of these cases, (Families 2 and 9), these daughters met their U.S.-based siblings for the first time when they reunified with their parents. While I encountered the limitation in this research of only being able to examine sibling relationships within a few of the participant transnational, mixed-status families, valuable
narratives were elicited from members of these families, including from several of the adolescent girls who now live in the U.S. These narratives suggest sibling sub-systems should be explored in future research with transnational families.

One common finding across the sibling relationships examined in this study is that Guatemala-based youth and youth who grew up in Guatemala and recently migrated to the U.S. do not feel very close to their U.S.-based siblings. They feel a much weaker bond to them than to the siblings with whom they grew up in Guatemala. While this finding is not surprising, the emotional reflections presented about this issue were surprising. Jessica expressed feeling very distant toward her six-year old sister with whom she shared a bedroom after migrating to the U.S. to reunify with, primarily, her mother. M’caela was reportedly annoyed with her little siblings in the U.S., after growing up in Guatemala as an only child and reuniting with her parents and siblings in the U.S. And Saira, who is still in Guatemala, conveyed ambivalent and seemingly spiteful feelings towards her two siblings in the U.S.

A possible interpretation of these experiences, as described previously, is that these youth are displacing the feelings of anger or resentment they may have towards their parents onto their siblings. In Saira’s case, it may be easier to express negative emotions about her siblings in the U.S., who she has never met, than about her mother and father who migrated when Saira was in early childhood. This makes sense given the adoration Ben (Family 1) expresses for his little brother, Jon, in the U.S., who he met and spent several weeks with in Guatemala a few years ago. This finding supports some of the research with transnational youth based in the U.S. that shows how youth’s transnational attachments are fairly weak when children cannot visit their parents’ origin
countries, where their transnational relatives remain (Menjivar, 2002).

Important to note is that Saira’s brother, Julio, who declined to be interviewed because of his supposed timidity, was the youth who was described as expressing more anger towards his parents during cross-border processes of all the youth in participant families. While Julio did not explain his side of the story or why he reportedly “threw the phone” when his father tried to give him consejos, (a story both his parents and his caregiver-grandmother relayed in separate interviews), from the data provided by his parents and caregiver it seems he, unlike his sister, has no problem directing his emotions and anger at what he views as the source: his migrant parents in the U.S. Julio reportedly acted out his emotions towards his parents for “leaving him” on several occasions.

Fortunately, during a phone conversation with Cristina, in April 2012, she explained that recently Julio “el dejo su malcomportamiento,” “has stopped behaving badly.” This suggests that perhaps Julio was experiencing more positive feelings towards his parents and their transnational family system. It also suggested that the cross-border relationship between Julio and his mother was undergoing more changes and perhaps improving since the interviews I conducted with them both in spring 2011.

**Relationships with participants and depth of data collection.** These observations about cross-border relationships represent only a few of the details of transnational family life and family change that I was able to document during this two-year dissertation process. In addition to capturing some of the potential developmental and relationship changes within participant families over the two years, I personally experienced developing more trust with and affective ties to several participant families by visiting with parents in the U.S. and their children, cousins and older relatives in
Guatemala several times. I, thereby, felt that I was keyed into some of the personal challenges and emotions that mothers, spouses, caregivers and children within these complicated family systems experienced. I probably would not have been able to learn about many of these issues if I only had the chance to talk to and meet with family members one time. The bonds I developed with certain families and family members also influenced how I responded to their family or relationship challenges. As mentioned previously, after getting to know several mothers and wives in participant families in Guatemala, I approached meeting their husbands in the U.S. who had been separated from them for nearly a decade (in Families 3, 7, and 8) with negative feelings about their remaining physically absent from their Guatemala-based families’ lives. I felt that way even when spouses, elected caregivers and/or children in Guatemala told me they preferred their migrant relatives to remain in the U.S. to support them financially (i.e., Maria, Family 8, Ben, Family, Saira, Family 6, Leopold, Family 7).

Learning about fathers. Even though I got to know several families and participants well throughout the course of this dissertation, I was not able to develop a bond with every participant or every family, which meant that the depth of data I collected from individuals in this study varied. I specifically felt that I was able to get to know females in this dissertation better than males based on our shared characteristics and experiences. The women in this dissertation also seemed more interested in participating in interviews than the men, and were better about following through with our plans for me to visit and conduct interviews with them. In two cases, I arrived at the houses of participant fathers (and mothers) in the U.S., after discussing over several phone conversations my interest and their agreement in doing an interview that day, only
to learn upon arriving that these fathers were about to head to work or church and that an interview would not be possible.

In addition to these apparent miscommunications and misunderstandings with fathers in particular, I had a harder time arranging to do interviews with men and women who I was meeting for the first time as part of this dissertation process than with those who I had met previously. I felt that it was much easier, for example, to communicate, interact, and enhance the relationships I had with women and families who I had met (or whose relatives I had met) several years earlier through our participation in the HRMP (Families 1, 8, and 9). Neither of these relational experiences are surprising in light of gender dynamics in Guatemala where within gender group conversations are much more common than across gender communication, and where previous contact, particularly that facilitated by a known person of trust, facilitates subsequent communication.

Despite this, and after a few failed attempts, I was able to conduct interviews with and gather some very rich data from seven fathers in the U.S. These interviews suggested that within some migrant groups, fathers do play an important socio-emotional role in transnational, mixed-status families. This finding was an additional strength of this study, as fathers are often neglected in research with transnational families or viewed as only having a minimal affective and almost exclusively financial role in their families (Lamb, 2010).

From interviews with boys and girls in Guatemala, I also learned that youth in these families felt affective ties to their migrant fathers. Leopold, for example, who grew up with his mother in Guatemala, described his father’s departure with the verb, “arrancar,” that is, “to tear” something from you. The interview with Leopold also
contributed to research exploring how children respond differently to the migration of a father versus a mother (see, Dreby, 2010; Foner & Dreby, 2011). Leopold noted that, even though he got to grow up with his mother, unlike some of the children in Families 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, he felt that receiving guidance from his mother did not make up for the lack of guidance from his father, who had been living in the U.S. since he was six. Carlos, the caregiver-sibling in Family 4, also noted that while he has adjusted to his father and mother’s migrations to the U.S. since becoming a sibling-caregiver, he remembers when his father first migrated and he experienced wanting to play with and receive consejos from his father who was physically absent. Marianna (Family 8) also discussed feeling losses related to having her father in the U.S. for many years, even though she noted that she still received consejos from him over the phone. Finally, Nina (Family 3) demonstrated the importance of having her father in her life by migrating to the U.S. “illegally” to reunite with him, against the wishes of her mother who she left behind in Guatemala.

**Language and cultural barriers.** While these youth shared powerful responses and narratives about the emotional experience of having a migrant mother, father or both parents physically absent from their lives for prolonged periods of time, there were certainly limitations in the depth of narratives provided by youth, and even more, by their caregivers because of language characteristics and language barriers. These challenges may be related to differences in the ways in which emotions are expressed in Mayan languages compared to Spanish or English. Research has shown, for example, that the Maya are more constrained in their emotional expressions than are Europeans and Americans (see, Gaskins & Miller, 2009, pp. 5-21). In this study, this seemed to influence
the emotions participants, and primarily, grandmother-caregivers, communicated during interviews. More importantly, my lack of K’iche’ as well as my limited Spanish influenced the data I collected throughout this dissertation and, specifically, the questions I asked throughout the interview process. I believe I was able to gain more information from U.S.-based adults and the majority of Guatemala-based children in this study, than Guatemala-based adults, as U.S.-based migrants and their children in Guatemala appeared to communicate frequently in Spanish, while the older generation of Guatemala-based relatives frequently switched between K’iche’ and Spanish. Some youth in this study also seemed more comfortable responding to interview questions in K’iche’, especially if their grandparents, who spoke in K’iche’ more frequently than in Spanish, had raised them (i.e., in Families 1 and 6). Even though I had interpreters on hand to aid in the interview process, these interpreters were not formally trained as translators and some did not have relationships with the participant families. Even with the assistance of interpreters, interviews were constrained to some degree by communication barriers and socio-cultural differences that influenced the ways in which I asked questions and how the participants provided answers about emotions and events. As importantly, cultural differences framed the nature of the relationships that could be formed, especially in rural communities in Guatemala.

**Limitations of data.** A possible limitation in this study was that the data generated included retrospective narratives from participants about migration and separation experiences that had taken place, in some cases, over a decade ago. The narratives analyzed in this dissertation, like all life stories, were restoried as participants reflected on and attempted to remember earlier moments in their family’s migration and
separation experiences in the context of current-day experiences. It is possible that participants’ may have responded differently to questions if they had been asked at different points in their migration experiences (e.g., when parents’ first migrated), and during different sociopolitical and socio-historical moments. Specifically, participants’ understandings of their family’s migration and transnationalization experiences in the 21st century may differ from the views they had about these experiences when family members initially migrated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, soon after the civil war in Guatemala and before the U.S.-Mexico border was as heavily guarded as it is today. It is, thus, important to view the theory developed in this study and the data generated here as inextricably linked to the sociopolitical and socio-historical context in which participants in this study are currently living.

*Selection effects.* Another limitation in this study is that the data seemed to include only *some* of the negative consequences of parental migration and prolonged family separation within families that has been reported in previous research with transnational families from the global south (see, Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Dreby, 2010; Parreñas, 2005). This could be because only families who experienced relatively harmonious transnational relationships were willing to participate in this research. The participant transnational, mixed-status families that selected into this study may have been those that were thriving compared to other families in their communities.

This possible selection effect could explain why only one participant family (Family 6) seemed to be experiencing significant moments of strain, and possibly, ruptures, in the cross-border, parent-child relationship and in the relationship between the Guatemala-based grandmother-caregiver (Sabina) and the Guatemala-based son (Julio),
despite all participant families experiencing parent-child separations across borders for approximately a decade. While Family 6 and other participant families reported experiences of school-related problems and negative socio-emotional functioning in the children left behind in these families, research suggests that the occurrence of these incidents is much higher than was reported in this study (Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Research has also shown that one of the negative consequences of parental migration on children left behind in origin countries is that they fall victim to intra-familial abuse (Castañeda & Buck, 2011). While this was reported in one case (i.e., Jessica, Family 2), the Guatemala-based households examined in this study appeared to function well based on reports provided by families.

Furthermore, the only mention of trauma in this study occurred when Julianna (Family 2) discussed her daughter Jessica’s experience of abuse, and when Julia (Family 1) described the work-site raid in the Northeastern U.S. during which she was arrested and detained. While these incidents were significant in these families’ narratives, the general findings from this study do not support previous research showing that the migration of a parent or both parents to the U.S. is traumatic for children and other relatives left in origin countries (see Artico, 2003; Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). Importantly, informants from Fe y Alegria and the faith-based leaders in Zacualpa stated that the emotional repercussions in families when parents migrated to the U.S. were possibly more traumatic and severe than was captured in this dissertation. The lack of data in this research suggesting that Guatemala-based children experience the migration of parents and prolonged physical absences of parents as traumatic, points to a possible limitation related to the sample and data collected in this
dissertation, and/or to the possibility that participant Mayan families are incredibly resilient, as discussed below.

**Validity.** In addition to the above strengths and limitations of this study, there were important validity issues based on sample characteristics. As mentioned previously, the participants in this study were all members of Maya K´iche´ transnational families, with experiences of exploitation, violence, and war in their recent histories. Several families (Family 6 and 7) discussed how relatives migrated to purchase property because the loss of parent(s) during the armed conflict in Guatemala prevented them from inheriting land or money.

This sample was limited to Maya K´iche´ families to be able to attend to how some of these socio-historical and socioeconomic factors in Guatemala may be connected to the current undocumented migrations and family separation experiences of transnational Mayan families. This group was also believed to have characteristics in common with other groups of migrants on the move throughout the world. To explore these factors, this study took place in the contexts where families live (Eastern Seaboard in U.S. and Zacualpa Guatemala), after the researcher had already spent several years traveling between and working in these contexts as part of her participation in the transnational HRMP. Some of the findings reported here supported findings from other research with this population, and with similarly situated transnational families (see, Brabeck et al., 2011; Dreby, 2010). Based on these aspects of this study, it is high on ecological validity (Fabes, Martin, Hanish, & Updegraff, 2000).

Because of these particular contexts in which families are nested, as well as the small sample size that was required for qualitatively rich data to be collected from this
vulnerable population over a two-year period, however, this study is not widely 
generalizable and is, therefore, low on external validity. It is still possible for scholars to 
use findings from this study to direct future research with other populations of 
transnational, mixed-status families from Central America or from other regions in the 
global south, while attending to unique contextual factors.

In particular, the theory developed from this study was based on experiences 
reported by 36 adolescents, parents, and caregivers in families who lived along the 
Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. or Zacualpa, Guatemala. All participants were indigenous 
Maya with histories and current experiences that are related to their ethnic identities and 
experiences of marginalization in Guatemala and now in the U.S. Future research with a 
larger sample of ethnically diverse migrants could, nonetheless, use knowledge generated 
in this study to examine whether similar cross-border strategies and strains in family 
relationships are present in other transnational family experiences. If similar research 
were to be conducted with a larger population of transnational families, the 
generalizability of the research would be improved. This would also be possible if a 
similar study was designed with a larger sample of transnational, mixed-status Mayan 
families. Informants in Guatemala noted that Zacualpa was not the only municipality in 
Guatemala experiencing strains and benefits of migration and transnationalism. There is a 
need and potential for more research to be conducted with a larger population of 
transnational families in and outside of Guatemala to assess the family experiences and 
challenges related to globalization and the family project of migration.

Even though this study may be low in external validity, the findings about the 
experiences of transnational, mixed-status Mayan families suggests that this study is high
on other measures of validity that have been identified as the new standards for evaluating research in developmental psychology in the 21st century (Febes et al., 2000). Fabes and colleagues (2000) list three new measures of validity in particular that apply to this study. They discuss the importance of evaluating the “impact validity” of a study, which they define “as the degree to which a research topic is perceived to have serious and possibly enduring consequences for children and families” (p. 216). Given that the number of transnational families is on the rise throughout the U.S. and the world (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011), and that detention and deportation rates have skyrocketed throughout the U.S. over the last five years, it is likely that the topics covered in this study will have enduring consequences for increasing numbers of families. This study is, therefore, high in impact validity.

The authors define “sympathetic validity” as the extent to which research generates sympathy for the individuals or population that is affected by the problem under study. While it is my great hope that this study achieved this or that it will at least lead others to empathize with the plight of transnational families from the global south, this measure of validity can only be assessed based on the reactions of readers. Finally, Fabes and colleagues (2000) suggest that 21st century research be high on “salience validity,” such that researchers investigate issues or topics about which the public is aware. Immigration and deportation have become incredibly controversial policy issues that are widely debated in the U.S. and the U.S. public has shown that it is aware of these issues and has opinions about them (see Massey & Pren, 2012). This study is thus high on salience validity.

III. Future Research Areas
This study has provided information about and insight into transnational, mixed-status family relationships and challenges experienced by the participant Maya K’iche’ families. It has shown how participant families as a whole, and some of the diverse members of these families, experience complex moments of “reorganization, redefinition, accommodation and change (as well as continuity) across borders” (Menjívar, 2012, p. 310). Findings from this study also suggest that more research is needed with Mayan, transnational, mixed-status families and other ethnic groups on a range of topics. Some of the areas for future research are reviewed here.

**Role of gender.** An important finding from this work was that adolescents in participant families experienced loss, regardless of whether their mother, father or both parents were in the U.S. and physically separated from them for prolonged periods of time. Because of the limited sample size and the variation in the structures of participant, transnational, mixed-status families, it was difficult to theorize about differences between cross-border father-child relationships compared to cross-border mother-child relationships. How the gender of the children and the parents engaged in cross-border relationships over time influences these relationships and the experiences of transnational, mixed-status families as whole, should be investigated in future research. This study has importantly drawn attention to the experiences of sons and fathers that do not fit the common stereotype in research with migrant families. It found that fathers matter both affectively and economically to their children and wives in origin countries, and actively participate in cross-border processes and relationships. This study also showed how sons, including teenage boys in Guatemala, express feelings about the absence of fathers from their lives, and try “to perform the roles of a mother and father,”
(see Carlos, Family 4) during migration processes, challenging some aspects of machismo which is assumed to characterize Latino and Guatemalan culture (see, e.g., Reimman, 2009). Some of these “against the grain” findings should be explored in future research so that a more complete and complex understanding of family relationships, and a clearer understanding of gendered relationships and experiences in migrant and transnational family systems, can be developed.

**Exploring sample variation.** It is important to note that despite the small sample size and the inclusion criteria identified at the start of this study, there was significant variation in the structures of participant families and in the dyadic relationships discussed. Despite this variation, the multiple members of families who participated in this dissertation all reported engaging in communication, remittances and consejos processes to maintain ties across borders, and to sustain transnational, mixed-status families. The data from participants supported and expanded previous research that shows how in the 21st century, good parenting in transnational families is often identified as migrant parents consistently sending remittances from the U.S. to relatives in origin countries (Artico, 2003; Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Menjívar, 2012; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012;). Every family, and participants across the sample, suggested that remittances enabled migrant parents to maintain a symbolic presence in their children’s lives. Findings also showed that while migrant parents made efforts to be present in their Guatemala-based children’s lives—through remittances, communication, and consejos—there were emotional repercussions in transnational family systems related to the physical absence of parents from Guatemala that could not be easily resolved with the exchanging of money or material goods. The experiences reported by Family 6, and by the adolescent
participants in this study, suggest that while remittances are an important part of the transnational family experience, they are not the only part. They also suggest that just as family systems based in one nation need to be explored in research in all of their complexity, so too should transnational families, and cross-border relationships between parents and children, be examined and understood in terms of their multiple and dynamic parts.

*Attention to sub-systems.* One way for future research to contribute to examining the complexities of transnational families is to explore sub-systems within transnational, mixed-status families that received limited attention in this research and in previous research with transnational families from the global south. Future research with Mayan transnational families, for example, should focus on sibling relationships across borders. This research could include data that examines how U.S.-based children view and relate to their siblings in Guatemala. It is important to document whether tensions between siblings, as identified in research with other Central American and Mexican families (i.e., Dreby, 2010; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Menjivar & Abrego, 2009), are also present within Mayan families, who have unique socio-cultural and familial characteristics (Hagan, 1994; Rogoff, 2003). It also would be important to have more information about how U.S.-born siblings in ethnically Mayan families respond to the sudden presence of older siblings who were born and raised in Guatemala in their lives, when families arrange for their Guatemala-based children to migrate and join them in the U.S. Such information could enhance the social and mental health services that might be made available to migrant families in the U.S., U.S.-citizen children who are a part of these families, and children from or remaining in parents’ origin nations (e.g., Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011;
Caregivers. The experiences of caregivers in transnational, mixed-status families should also be explored more fully in future research. While this dissertation included interviews with Guatemala-based caregivers within participant families, the family members who took on the main caregiving role varied across three generations and included siblings, mothers, and grandparents. Because of this variation and the small sample, conclusions about the experiences of Guatemala-based caregivers are limited. It is clear, however, that when a mother becomes the sole caregiver of her Guatemala-based children during migration and transnational processes, the experience is significantly different from that of grandparents or siblings elected to take care of Guatemala-based children. Despite this, the Guatemala-based mothers in this study described conversations with U.S.-based husbands that were similar to those of other elected caregivers with parents in the U.S.

Another similarity across caregivers in this study was that all engaged in cross-border communication and remittances processes, and they all viewed these processes as ultimately having a functional purpose in their transnational family relationships. They also gave consejos to the children they cared for in Guatemala, and to their adult children in the U.S. when Guatemala-based caregivers were grandparents (i.e., Paula, Family 1). How Guatemala-based caregivers’ participation in consejos exchanges contributed to the maintenance of their transnational, mixed-status families is less clear from this study.

More information is needed for conclusions to be drawn about the experiences of Guatemala-based caregivers in transnational, mixed-status family systems, and how the experiences of sibling-caregivers differ from experiences of grandparent-caregivers. This
study did not support previous research that viewed caregivers, and particularly
grandparent-caregivers, as having the primary responsibility throughout the development
of children in their care of being the “gatekeeper” in relationships between these children
and their U.S.-based migrant parents (e.g. Dreby, 2010). Analyses suggest that during
initial migration stages, when Guatemala-based children were in early childhood,
caregivers had the task of telling them stories or lies (Paula in Family 1, Sabina in Family
6) about their parents’ whereabouts, to prevent the children from getting too upset or
feeling abandoned by their parents. As separation phases transitioned from initial to long-
term and prolonged phases, children in Guatemala became adolescents and seemed to
gain significant power and agency in their cross-border, parent-child relationships. They
even determined how and how frequently to engage in communication, remittances, and
consejos processes, overriding the gatekeeper role formerly held by their Guatemala-
based caregivers.

While Guatemala-based caregivers seem to have less “control” in the
relationships between the children in their care and U.S.-based, migrant parents as the
children become adolescents, this does not suggest that Guatemala-based caregivers
become less valued by the children. Rather, over time, attachments between these
caregivers and children seem to strengthen, as has been found in previous research with
transnational families from the global south (e.g., Artico, 2003; Foner & Dreby, 2011;
Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). It would be important to collect more data from Guatemala-
based caregivers in the future to generate more knowledge about how their emotions
toward the migration of parents and the development of the children in their care change
as time goes on, as the information on this topic was limited because of language and,
possibly, cultural barriers. More research with caregivers is needed to gain in-depth understandings of the alternative caregiver experience because, as this study showed, differently situated family members, with their own developmental and life challenges, take on this role when parents migrate.

*Comparative research.* Comparative research that includes other ethnic groups in transnational, mixed-status families is another important next step to test the theory developed from this study about the ways in which transnational, mixed-status Mayan families develop and maintain relationships across borders and through periods of separation. Research with transnational families from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Mexico has shown that communication and remittances are vital to the functioning of their cross-border family relationships (Dreby, 2010; Levitt, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Consejos have not been identified as a particularly important cross-border process for these groups. Future research with migrant groups from other regions of the world may show that communication and remittances are valued in similar ways to maintain family bonds across borders. If this is the case, than there would be increased empirical support for the theoretical argument that policies easing communication and remittance processes should be considered in discussions of immigration reform in the U.S. and internationally (see, Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). Comparative research also could explore whether migrant groups utilize different family processes and experience other forms of familial strain and ruptures during prolonged family separations than the Mayan families in this study. It is important to determine in future research if and how particular social and historical characteristics buffer transnational, mixed-status families of different origins from the challenges of migration and
IV. Implications for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Introduction. While this study has important limitations, it generated valuable information about multiple relationships within complex, transnational, mixed-status Maya K’iche’ families. In doing so, this dissertation contributed to the literature exploring “how intimate ties between parents and children are influenced by structural conditions that shape global migration patterns” (Foner & Dreby, 2011, p. 10). The findings from this research can contribute to discussions about immigration reform in the United States as well as discussions about several related policies, and will be even stronger when findings are replicated with a larger sample of transnational, mixed-status families.

Below I begin to theorize about how the current findings could inform a broad range of policy issues that are currently debated in the United States. Some of the discussion extends beyond what the data from this small sample of participants directly supports, as it considers immigration policy issues that have been documented as affecting the general population of undocumented migrants in the U.S., of which participant families are a small part. The issues summarized below are complex and not discussed in much detail but rather briefly mentioned as they relate to findings from this dissertation. I additionally present suggestions about how to proceed from a policy standpoint but have excluded lengthy descriptions of next steps for policy and action as this would go beyond the confines of this dissertation and this final section. These
discussions are offered in hopes that this dissertation will contribute to debates about comprehensive immigration reform and the rights of migrants in the 21st century.

**Targeting family separation experiences.** One of the most important findings from this dissertation was that families were experiencing prolonged separations because of, reportedly, heightened border security along the U.S.-Mexico border and the stagnant economy in Guatemala, which provides Maya in El Quiché, Guatemala with few opportunities “para sacar la familia adelante,” “to get ahead as families.” Families specifically explained that their motivations for transnationalizing, and for arranging for a parent to migrate to the U.S. “illegally” was based in their desires to “conseguir trabajo,” “find work,” “sacar la familia adelante,” “get ahead as a family,” and “dar a mis ninos un educacion,” “give my children an education.” Participant families and almost every participant claimed that these goals cannot be reached if a parent or both parents do not migrate to the U.S. This finding supports previous research with families from the global south suggesting migration and prolonged experiences of family separation that result from migration are a consequence of socioeconomic and socio-legal factors in origin and host societies (see, Castañeda & Buck, 2011; Dreby, 2010; Foner & Dreby, 2011; Menjívar, 2012; Parreñas, 2005).

**Socioeconomic implications.** The findings from this dissertation suggest that as long as Guatemala’s economy continues to suffer, and the poverty rate remains at approximately 75%, undocumented migration will continue and families will continue to experience separation (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). Some families also will continue to challenge sociopolitical systems with the “illegal” migration of a spouse or child from origin countries after a parent migrates
“illegally,” finds work and settles into his or her life in the U.S. (Foner & Dreby, 2011). This chain-migration pattern has been occurring between the global south and the U.S. for more than a decade (see Foner & Dreby, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001;).

In response to socioeconomic challenges in much of the global south, human rights and legal scholars, as well as advocates for migrant rights, have made arguments for “illegal” migrants to be viewed as economic refugees and in terms of the global forces that encourage their migration (Cook, 2009; Phillips, 2006). Legal scholars have also made complex arguments for refugee law to be expanded or interpreted using human rights law so that migrants seeking refuge in host societies because of the violation of their economic rights in origin countries have more chances to apply for asylum (Foster, 2007; Marouf & Anker, 2009). These scholars have argued that from a human rights perspective, refugee law can be interpreted to include not only individuals fleeing civil or political persecution, but also those who have been denied the protection of their economic rights by their government (Foster, 2007; Marouf & Anker, 2009). What this would mean in practice is that asylum claims from migrants in the U.S., for example, would have to be adjudicated with a sharpened understanding of human rights standards and of the definition of a refugee (Marouf & Anker, 2009).

According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (see, UNHCR, 2012), a refugee is one who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." Legal scholars insist
that claims based on socioeconomic harm fall within the scope of this convention (Foster, 2007; Marouf & Anker, 2009). They have argued that human rights analyses of this convention suggest that persecution refers not only to explicit persecution of groups of persons by the state, but also to the state violating the human rights of its inhabitants by refusing to offer them protection from harm, including socioeconomic harm (Marouf & Anker, 2009).

In U.S. contexts, asylum seekers, including Mayan migrants, have sought refuge in the U.S. from the socioeconomic harm that they reportedly endured in countries of origin (Marouf & Anker, 2009). In most cases, however, asylum seekers have had to show they were fleeing “life-threatening conditions” and not simply “serious harm” that they experienced because their socioeconomic rights were violated (Marouf & Anker, 2009). Part of the problem with asylum claims nested in economic and socioeconomic rights-based claims, is that economic and social rights have been viewed as “second generation” rights in comparison to political and civil rights (Marouf & Anker, 2009). Specifically, according to refugee law, political and civil rights are “first generation” rights, thus individuals experiencing violation of their political and civil rights, or forms of political or civic persecution, do not have to demonstrate as “severe” treatment as those experiencing and arguing for asylum on the basis of violation of economic and social rights to, for example, food, health, housing, education and employment (Marouf & Anker, 2009).

The United Nations has made efforts to recognize the interdependence of first and second generation rights, and has pushed for more complex understandings of rights and equality in general (Marouf & Anker, 2009). It is clear, however, that nations like the
United States, that have not ratified important human rights conventions, such as the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (see UNHCR, 2012b) continue to impose higher standards for socioeconomic claims, and view socioeconomic claims separately from experiences of physical harm and other forms of harm even though “the two are inextricably intertwined (e.g., someone deprived of sufficient food, clean water, or medical care suffers physical harm)” (Marouf & Anker, 2009, p. 788).

These legal arguments can be applied to considerations of comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S. They suggest that the U.S. government and U.S. citizens and non-citizens should begin to imagine a form of immigration policy that defends labor, cultural, civil, social, environmental and economic rights of all people, regardless of their “legality” (Campbell, 2006). Other human rights and migrant rights arguments have similarly asserted that wealth should not be the basis on which a person is granted the ability to receive a visa and move across borders, but that, rather, an individual’s opportunities for mobility and equality in his or her homeland should take precedence when considering immigration policies and visa issuing systems (Campbell, 2006).

*Socioeconomic implications in the Guatemala context.* The devastatingly low social and human indicators in Guatemala, as well as the stories of participant families, suggest that economic opportunities and economic equality will continue to be out of reach for much of the indigenous population in Guatemala for years to come. The argument for expanding the purview of refugee law to consider the experiences of migrants who have bleak economic prospects in their origin countries may be appropriate in the case of undocumented Mayan migrants from Guatemala. A recent article in the Guatemalan newspaper the *Prensa Libre*, by journalist Carlos Ventura (2012) supports
this idea (see Ventura, 2012). This article covered the experiences of two families, each of which included undocumented Mayan mothers who were recently deported back to Guatemala with their U.S. citizen children. In one case, the mother and her 11-year old U.S.-citizen daughter were living in a village in the department of Totonicapán. After describing the malnutrition and throat problems from which her daughter suffers in Guatemala this mother noted:

Me duele ver el sufrimiento de mi hija, porque me recuerda mi infancia que estuvo rodeada de pobreza. Yo le dije que se quedara en Estados Unidos para que estudiara y viviera en mejores condiciones, pero no quiso; prefirió venir conmigo, pero lógicamente aquí es otra historia.

It hurts me to see my daughter suffering, because I remember my infancy when I was surrounded by poverty. I told her if you would stay in the U.S. you would be able to study and live in better conditions, but she didn’t want to; she preferred to come with me, but this is another story.

Another mother who was deported lived in a village of department of Retalhuleu with two of her daughters. She described returning to Guatemala when she was deported while her husband remained in the U.S. with three of their children. She noted:

Ellas nacieron en EE. UU. y a pesar de que éramos indocumentados, había comida, medicinas y educación. Espero que un día las cosas mejoren para mis hijas, no quiero que crezcan aquí porque los gobiernos solo piensan en beneficiar a sus financieras y a sus familias.

They were born in the U.S. and even though we were undocumented, they had food, medicine, and education. I hope one day that things are better for my daughters, I don’t want them to grow up here because the government officials only think about what will benefit those who finance them and their own families.

**Socio-legal and sociopolitical implications.** This dissertation was conducted with the hope that if the U.S. public had more information about diverse, transnational, mixed-status families divided between the U.S. and the global south, it would better understand their motivations for migrating and remaining in the U.S. and how their
family members in the U.S. and origin nations are affected by “illegality.” With more information, the voting public may, for example, support a comprehensive immigration reform bill that considers and attempts to reduce some of the challenges experienced by transnational, mixed-status families related to the “illegality” of their loved ones in the U.S. The topics discussed address possible solutions to these challenges for U.S.-based migrants and their families.

**Labor laws.** Some of the findings from this study show that specific U.S. policies and practices strain transnational families that could be adjusted to improve the experiences of U.S.-based migrants, and in doing so, the experiences of the relatives with whom they maintain relationships across borders. For example, this dissertation found that the wages and work conditions experienced by migrant parents in the U.S. affect not only their life experiences in the U.S. but also the frequency and form of communication they have with their children and spouses in origin countries (see, Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). In this study, migrant parents’ earnings influenced the amount of remittances they sent to children and other relatives in origin countries, and migrant parents’ reports about the number of years it was taking them to save enough money to either reunite with their children in the U.S. or return to origin countries. This experience has also been reported in research with other migrant groups (see, Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012, for more information).

Findings from this study and from research with other groups of transnational families from the global south (see, Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012) suggest that if undocumented workers received higher wages, they would be able to earn enough to pay for cellular phones, enabling them to maintain steady contact with their family members
in origin countries. Increased wages also could enable migrant parents to save money, as opposed to spending all their earnings on the expenses they incur in the U.S. and in origin countries, such as Guatemala. If migrants in the U.S. are able to save, they may be able to return home before separation transitions from long-term to prolonged phases, and, thus, before children in origin countries become angry and disappointed by their parents’ lengthy stays in the U.S. If these changes were made in the U.S. context, as transnational scholars suggest, it would limit the “corrosive effects” of migration on transnational families divided across the U.S. and Guatemala and enable them to “more easily maintain transnational ties that attenuate the negative effects of separation” (Menjívar, 2012, p. 318).

Even though the labor movement in the U.S. has pushed for increased labor rights for non-citizen workers regardless of their immigration status, it is likely that undocumented workers will not receive increased rights or higher wages without being offered the chance to work “legally” in the United States (Wishnie, 2008). Research has shown that there is some public support in the U.S. for an immigration reform package that includes pathways for legalization, expanded temporary-worker programs, and increased enforcement (Taylor et al., 2011; Wishnie, 2008). A reform bill of this nature would significantly benefit migrant parents who are also workers in the United States. If migrant parents had “access to legal statuses,” they also would have the power to come and go and reduce the prolonged periods of family separation that seem to be more common in the 21st century for transnational, mixed-status families from the global south than was the case in past decades (Dreby & Stutz, 2012; Massey, 2007; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012).
Guest worker programs. If the U.S. immigration system reconfigured guest worker programs so they were humane and offered workers fair wages and protection from exploitation, they could also become a possible avenue for “unskilled laborers” from Central America to support their families without remaining separated from them for prolonged periods of time (Wishnie, 2008; Menjívar, 2012). Harry Holzer (2011), an economist and public policy scholar from Georgetown University, in consultation with the Migration Policy Institute, offered such a proposal. In this proposal, Holzer (2011) points out that guest worker programs in the U.S. can be sensible and/or damaging to migrants for several reasons, and that these must be taken into consideration when designing future guest work programs. He argues that while they can eventually provide migrants who would otherwise cross into the U.S. “illegally” with pathways for legalization, these programs frequently result in exploitation of migrant workers by the employers who sponsor them. Holzer (2011) explains that guest workers are often subjected to abuse and wage deprivation but can do little to challenge these experiences because they have no resources for seeking other work once in the U.S. Holzer (2011) also points out that a negative consequence of guest worker programs is that guest workers often overstay their guest worker visas or seek employment outside the confines of their visa provisions, which lead to an increase in the unauthorized population in the U.S.

In consideration of these issues, Holzer (2011) proposes that a guest worker program that would be the most advantageous to migrant workers and the U.S. overall would have to allow migrants workers to come to the U.S. to work for six months or a year, and then switch jobs “with all of the protections that other workers have when so
He also strongly encourages programs to be designed that allow migrants to eventually “legalize” their statuses if they continue to comply with the terms of their visas throughout their time in the program. Holzer (2011) urges that these types of safeguards would “provide an incentive for temporary workers to choose the legal path over the illegal one and also improve their abilities to enjoy earnings growth and integration over time” (p. 17). Once being included in the category of “legal” workers, wage and hour regulations would be enforced and migrants would be able to earn and send more home to their families in origin countries (Holzer, 2011).

*Guest worker program for Mayan migrants.* In this dissertation, participant families were reportedly able to endure temporary periods of family separation more easily in past years than their current experiences of prolonged family separation (e.g., Families 1, 6, and 7). A guest worker program informed by Holzer’s proposal would allow families to be separated for no more than a year at time, and more migrants from the global south would have the chance to earn a living in the U.S. and support children in origin countries without having to survive years of marginalization and daily fears of immigration authorities and local law enforcement (Brabeck et al., 2011; Menjívar, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). If migrant parents were invited to work in the U.S. for several months to a year and then return home to their children in origin countries, transnational families would experience less emotional strain and hardship. They would also encounter less risk when migrating to the U.S. if they had permission to travel “legally” between the U.S. and origin countries. It is possible, however, that the costs of travel between the U.S. and origin nations would be prohibitively high for migrant workers from the global south, and that some families would still experience family
separations over long periods of time.

A thoughtful guest worker program may be one way in which some of the deleterious, spillover effects of U.S. policies on transnational families could be mitigated. It is important to note, however, that even if a guest worker program was implemented that provided more migrants from the global south with a means of entering and leaving the U.S. “legally,” some non-citizens probably would continue to violate the terms of their guest worker visas, and some migrants—such as those who do not qualify for guest worker programs—would continue to migrate to the U.S. without authorization (Winshie, 2008). For these reasons, legal scholars have argued that increasing the rights of undocumented workers before a legalization program is announced and implemented is the way to increase opportunities for the most significant number of migrants and their children in the U.S. (Winshie, 2008). Increasing the rights of undocumented workers in the U.S., such as the migrant parents in this dissertation, may also enable them to earn higher wages, save more money, and return to their families in Guatemala before “2 years converts into ten” (see Mauricio, Family 3).

**Legalizing undocumented migrants.** David Thronson (2010) has argued that the best way to increase the rights of undocumented migrants and their U.S-based children is to permit children with legal immigration statuses, such as U.S.-citizen children who have citizenship because they were born in the United States, to extend these benefits to parents and other family members who are present in the U.S. without authorization. While U.S.-citizen parents can extend their privileges of citizenship to children, U.S.-citizen children cannot pass on their citizenship benefits to undocumented parents until they are 21-years of age. Moreover, U.S.-citizen children cannot typically pass on their
citizenship status to their parents while their parents are “unlawfully” present in the U.S, despite the fact that approximately 75% of children born to undocumented parents in the U.S. have citizenship (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Thronson’s proposal responds to the problem of immigration law devaluing children’s rights in the process of detaining and deporting their undocumented migrant parents. Because of the lack of respect for children’s rights and family unity in immigration law, the U.S. government has effectively violated the rights of thousands of U.S.-citizen children and forcibly separated them from their parents (Kanstroom, 2007; Wessler, 2011). As of 2011, it was reported that over 5,000 children were living in the foster care system in the U.S. because their parents had been detained or deported by the U.S. government (Wessler, 2011).

As Thronson (2010) notes, allowing the “assimilation of parents’ status to that of a child” is one way in which the U.S. immigration system could right the wrong of neglecting to recognize and prioritize “children’s interests in family integrity” (pp. 256-7). Thronson (2010) also points out that legalizing undocumented migrant parents through their children’s statuses would enable parents to integrate economically and socially “for the benefit and support of their child and the family as a whole” (p. 259).

*Legalizing undocumented migrants in Mayan transnational families.* While this proposal provides one avenue for reducing the strains experienced by U.S.-based members of transnational, mixed-status families, it is not clear how it would influence their wider transnational family networks. Thronson implies that this proposal would be used to support the “whole family,” but its main concern is for the members of the family living in the U.S.
If an immigration policy similar to Thronson’s proposal was implemented in the U.S., it would be important to ask if U.S.-citizen children would be able to petition for their siblings and grandparents in origin countries to migrate to the U.S. once their undocumented migrant parents received citizenship through them, or if the parents could do this after adjusting their statuses. It also would be important to ask where the U.S. government would draw the line when deciding who, within a U.S.-citizen child’s transnational, mixed-status family would be able to obtain the same rights as the child, and who would experience delimited and constrained rights and privileges (Menjívar, 2012). This is especially important given the value the Maya and other ethnic subgroups of migrants place on their extended kin networks (Hagan, 1994). This is also important because this study, and previous research with transnational families, suggests that children in origin countries can experience negative emotions and identifications with relatives based in the U.S. when these relatives are perceived as having privileges of citizenship and other opportunities in the U.S. that children left behind are without (see, for example, Dreby, 2010; Menjívar & Abrego, 2009).

*Socio-historical argument for legalizing undocumented Maya in the U.S.*

Another argument that has been proposed about why the U.S. should specifically legalize undocumented migrants from Guatemala is that it should take responsibility for the role it played in the 36-year armed conflict (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991, 2001; Menjívar, 2012). Moreover, a significant body of research, as well as the narratives provided by Cristina (Family 6) and Cesar (Family 4) in this study, have demonstrated that some of the migration push factors for the Maya, such as uninterrupted poverty in Guatemala and persistent inequality between ladinos and Mayas in Guatemala, can only
be understood in relation to the armed conflict (see, e.g., Grandin et al., 2012; Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991; Melville & Lykes, 1992).

The high rate of unauthorized migration from Guatemala to the U.S. began as the civil war in Guatemala began in the 1960s (Charmarbagwala & Morán, 2011; Moran-Taylor & Taylor, 2010). Research has documented that the Guatemalan government sponsored the violence and that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had ties to and trained the Guatemalan military in the early 1980s, which was responsible for the torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of civilians (Hamilton & Chinchilla, 2001). Moreover, some research suggests that the military officers who committed the most brutal violent acts were CIA operatives (Hamilton & Chinchilla 2001, p. 32). It is argued that Guatemala has not recovered from this war despite the signing of the peace accord in 1996 (see, Lykes, Beristain, & Pérez-Armiñan, 2007). While Guatemalan migrants themselves, immigrants rights groups, and the Guatemalan government lobbied for the U.S. to create pathways for legalizing the undocumented Guatemalan population in the U.S., these attempts were largely unsuccessful (Bibler Coutin, 2000; Menjívar, 2012). Even though a nominal number of Guatemalan migrants were beneficiaries of the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) if they filed asylum applications before April 1, 1990, the vast majority of Guatemalan migrants in the U.S. are present without authorization (Bibler Coutin, 2000; Brabeck et al., 2011; Davis, 2007; Menjívar, 2012; Passel, 2007). Until the U.S. publicly apologizes and takes steps to make up for its wrongdoings during the armed conflict, scholars and activists will continue to argue that the U.S. needs to take some responsibility for the plight of the Maya in Guatemala to this day (see, Bibler Coutin, 2000; Menjívar, 2012; Parry, 2012).
International human rights standards and reform. A broader proposal for reform that would positively influence Maya as well as other transnational, mixed-status families living across the U.S. and migrants’ origin nations, presented by legal scholar Daniel Kanstroom (2011) among others, argues that U.S. immigration policy should be reframed so that it reflects international human rights standards. Kanstroom (2011) also calls for immigration policy to prioritize “proportionality, compassion and respect for family unity,” values which informed the initial construction of U.S. immigration law. If this happened, Kanstroom (2011) notes, immigration courts would have to consider how family life and the nature of ties between a prospective deportee and his origin country would be affected by a ruling in a deportation case. Moreover, if these changes were implemented, the penalties undocumented migrants would face for being present in the U.S. without authorization would have to be proportionate to the nature of their criminal conduct (Kanstroom, 2011).

If the U.S. immigration system lived up to international human rights standards, the transnational, mixed-status families affected by immigration and deportation policies and social experiences of “illegality” would be viewed as “a natural and fundamental unit of society that is entitled to protection by society and the State” (see, Nessel, 2008; UNHCR, 2012a for more information on American Convention on Human Rights; and United Nations, 2012, for more information on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). This would be a far cry from the experiences of undocumented migrants in the 21st century, who confront the daily reality of the state continuing “to hold great power, as it delimits, constrains and affords rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities” (Menjívar, 2012, p. 318). If the U.S. immigration system also incorporated human rights
standards that included labor rights, and the U.S. government, for example, chose to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (1990) (see, UNHRC, 2012c), the undocumented migrant parents in this study, and many of the 11.2 million undocumented migrants in the U.S., could be afforded the protections of family unity for migrant workers (Nessel, 2008).

**Conclusion.** Before these significant changes can occur in U.S. immigration policy, the U.S. public has to undergo a significant and collective attitude change. It must come to view “illegal” migrants as undocumented workers, parents, and parts of vulnerable family networks, who are responding to structural conditions forcing family separation (Massey & Riosmena, 2010; Menjívar, 2012; Nessel, 2008). As this dissertation has shown, the determination and resilience of migrant parents and their children and caregivers in origin countries to negotiate physical distance and family separation over time has allowed transnational, mixed-status families to avoid family disintegration despite emotional hardship, limited mobility, and liminal legality (see also, Menjívar, 2012; Landolt & Da, 2005).

Every participant family in this study illustrated it was adapting to obstacles in the transnational context and finding ways to function in spite of prolonged separations. This finding suggests that the participant Mayan families who have experienced separations during periods of colonization, during the civil war in Guatemala, and, more recently, while working in Guatemala City (i.e., Julia, Family 1), have developed unique characteristics that buffer them from family challenges and other contextual strains to family relationships during migration. While historical experiences of separation may have prepared participant families for contemporary separations in some way, the
families described separation during migration as influenced by “illegality” and different from the separations they experienced within Guatemala (see quote from Julia, pg. 189). This suggests that even though 21st century migrants are able to adapt to family separation, the suffering and sadness they experience during prolonged family separation between the U.S. and Guatemala is more severe than what they experience when parents willfully migrate to Guatemala City or other areas within Guatemala to find work for several months.

If the U.S. public can take to heart these experiences, it may begin to re-frame its thinking about “illegal” migrants and come to view the movement of migrants from the global south to the U.S. as a structural reality that comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S. can address to benefit citizens and non-citizens alike. As participant families have shown, they are resilient and hardworking and make great sacrifices to improve the economic situation of their families. One participant father stated that he had migrated because he was “buscando el ‘Sueño Americana,’” “searching for the ‘American Dream.’” This father also reported that after living and working in the U.S. for over a decade and starting his own business, he believed he has reached it.

The participant families in this dissertation expressed they came to the U.S. to work very hard and eventually improve the lives of their family members (see, e.g., Daniela, Family 5). These are some of the very values engendered in U.S. society (Schmalzbauer, 2005). Including these migrants in the U.S. economy more fully would increase their earnings, the taxes they pay, and their overall spending, enabling them to make even stronger contributions to the U.S. than they have already made by working long hours and in some of the least desirable jobs (Fink, 2003; Hinojosa-Ojeda, 2012).
U.S. citizens and non-citizens may be more inclined to consider comprehensive immigration reform and ways to incorporate transnational, mixed-status families into the U.S., if they accept that in the 21st century international migration “challenges the salience of the borders separating one nation-state from another” (Bloemraad et al., 2008). The three adolescent girls who were all under age 15 and crossed the U.S.-Mexico border “illegally” attest to the reality of permeable borders. The persistent presence of undocumented migrants in the U.S. despite heightened border security and significant spending by the U.S. government on detention and deportation provides another economic motivation for including undocumented migrants in our “scopes of justice” as U.S. citizens.

To include these migrants in our “scope of justice,” the U.S., as a nation, would have to exchange its limited notions of citizenship for a more cosmopolitan or multicultural perspective (see Appiah, 2006; Bloemraad et al., 2008). Because undocumented migrants fall outside the “scope of justice” for U.S. citizens, it is easy for the media and policy makers to view and treat them as “expendable, undeserving nonentities who are eligible targets of exploitation” (Massey & Pren, 2012; Opotow, 2005, p.127). The destructive effects of this have been born out in the policies passed in Arizona and Alabama and in the ways they have affected citizens and non-citizens alike (see, e.g., Massey & Pren, 2012; Robertson, 2011).

If migrants were given the opportunity to come out of the shadows and begin adjusting their “illegal” statuses, they would be able to contribute more innovation, time, and money to the U.S. economy, and they and their often U.S. citizen children’s psychosocial experiences in the U.S. would undoubtedly improve (Hinojosa-Ojeda, 2012;
Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011; Zentgraf & Stoltz Chinchilla, 2012). The stories participants in this dissertation courageously shared support this finding and suggest they are “worthy” of inclusion in U.S. society.

Exclusion strains, sometimes to the breaking point, the families’ abilities to maintain bonds across space and over time and to succeed in the repressive, transnational contexts in which they live. Such challenges forced families in this study to reconfigure and family members to engage in cross-border processes to be present in the lives of their distant loved ones, but these families did not disintegrate (see, Menjívar, 2012). Immigration reform in the 21st century must reflect the complexity and necessity of maintaining relationships across borders, across thousands of miles and across legal barriers for so many transnational, mixed-status families.
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Appendices
APPENDIX A. YOUTH WORKSHOPS AT FE Y ALEGRIA

Workshop Agenda  July 2, 2010 [translated]
1.  Introduction of project [5 minutos]
   a.  (Ask permission to audio record and take pictures )
2.  Introductory game, names and village of origin (toss around imaginary flower) [6]
3.  Ice-breaker game [10]
   a.  Mirror game, in teams of two [2]
   b.  Puppet and puppeteer, in teams of two [3]
   c.  Debriefing: Why did we do activities with our bodies? How did it feel to be a mirror? [5]
4.  Thinking of family activity [divide the paper and split group by gender] [1 hr 10]
   a.  Drawings on big pieces of paper of family “here,”then tape them to walls around the room [15]
   b.  Question to ask students: “Do you have family members in the U.S.? … Ok, now we are going to draw those family members on the small pieces of paper” [15]
   c.  “One by one we are going to place the small piece of paper on the wall and in relation to the big piece of paper to symbolize how we feel about our family in the U.S. For example, I communicate with my family members in different states in the U.S. weekly but we don’t see each other a lot so I am going to put the little piece of paper here in relation to the drawing of family members with whom I live, not very very close, but fairly close.” (Jose Daniel, Cristina, and Esteban demonstrate the same with their drawings) [15]
   d.  “Now we are going to describe our drawings” (one student at a time). [15]
   e.  Debriefing: “How did it feel to represent and describe the distance, in terms of geographic distance and physical contact as well as emotions? How did it feel to hear about and see the distance in the drawings of your peers? In the drawings of the group leaders?” [10]
5.  Break: (During, tape several papers together for the final activity “inventing stories”) [10]
6.  Inventing stories: (theme: the experience of having family in the U.S.) [45]
   a.  “Students will come up with the words” (we need six pieces of paper, six words and six volunteers) [5]
   b.  Students will break into groups of three or four and create stories about immigration experiences with the names of characters we came up with together [15]
   c.  Each group presents their story [10]
   d.  Each group interprets the story of another group [15]
   ***** If 30 minutes left or less, final debriefing about the above activity and about project and discussion of rights of the migrant, if 40 minutes or more, debriefing, drawing, debriefing
7.  Debriefing
a. What did you think about the stories? Are they familiar to you, similar to your own lives? How did you feel when we were inventing stories? [if more time is left, divide into groups and give each group several big sheets of paper]

8. Collage/Drawing-[drawing rights of migrants-2 groups, mixed boys and girls)

9. Final debriefing: Which activity was your favorite? Which didn’t you like? How did you feel when sharing experiences of immigration with your peers and us?
APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT FAMILY GENOGRAMS

Genogram Key
- Male
- Female
- Lives in U.S
- Lives in town of Zacualpa Z
- Lives in village of Zacualpa Z.V
- Guatemala-based caregiver ✫
- U.S. Citizen ★
- Adopted
- Interviewee
- Missing information ?
- Informant/Background Interviewee ✔
- Recently arrived or on way to migrating to U.S ⌅
- Passed away ✗
- Separated

Figure B.1: Family 1

Paula 70s Z.V ✫

Mandi Z.V

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Wives and children in Z.V

Mandi Z.V

Gloria 40 Z.V

Sally 37

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Mario 45 Z.V

Moises 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.

Elder 21 U.S. ★

Sarah 21 Z.V

? Children in U.S and Z.V

Moses 30s U.S.

??

??

? ?

Wives and children in Z.V

6 other children in Z.V

Ali 19 U.S.
Figure B.4: Family 4

Figure B.5: Family 5
Figure B.6: Family 6

Figure B.7: Family 7
APPENDIX C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Boston College Informed Consent Form for Parents


Why have I been asked to take part in the study?
• Because you are a Latin American immigrant who has been directly affected by the US deportation laws
• Because you are at least 18 years of age
• Because you are a parent who has children
• Because you might have an interest in sharing your thoughts and feelings about how US deportation laws affect Latin American immigrant families and communities.

What do I do first?
• Before agreeing, please read this form.
• Please ask any questions that you may have.

What is the Study about?
• This study aims to learn about Latin American immigrant families’ experiences and their perceptions about immigration and deportation in their own words.
• We are specifically interested in participants’ thoughts about the effect of the deportation system on families and communities

Who will take part in the Study?
• 10 Mayan-Guatemalan Families whose relatives, including children, siblings, parents, grandparents, are spread out across the U.S. and Guatemala

If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?
• Complete an initial interview that is expected to last approximately 60 minutes.
• Complete a follow-up interview at a later date that is also expected to last approximately 60 minutes. If you do not wish to answer a question or discuss an issue, you can choose at any time to skip it and not answer.
• Allow us to tape record the interviews.
  If you do not wish to have the interviews tape-recorded, please tell us beforehand and we will not tape record anything without your permission.
  If you wish to stop the tape recorder at any time during the interview, please tell us and we will do so.
• If interested, we would like to take your photograph so that we can better explain the reality of life in Guatemala in future presentations and publications.
• With your permission, we will present the results from this research at meetings or in published articles.

What are the risks to being in the study?
• There is a minimal risk. That is, there is a chance that you could become upset or anxious during the interview. If the interview brings up sensitive topics about your experience or someone else discusses something that upsets you and you would like to talk with someone else about these feelings, I will be able to refer you to services in the area.
• If you feel anxious regarding anything that was discussed in the interview, we will refer you to a health provider at the local health center.
• The study may also include other risks that are unknown at this time.

What are the benefits to being in the study?
• You will have an outlet to express your experience of deportation in a safe place, without repercussion.
• The researcher will connect you to resources provided by the Human Rights and Immigration Project in Zacualpa- a collaboration between Boston College’s Center for Human Rights and International Justice and the Franciscan Sisters.
• This study will generate information that may inform law-making and policy in regards to deportation and how it affects families.

How will things I say be kept private?
• We will make every effort to keep the research records of this study confidential but it cannot be assured.
• In any type of report we may write, we will not include your name or anyone else’s that you mention.
• Research records (including tape recordings and photographs) will be kept in a locked file without your name in the offices of the Principle Investigator of this project.
• Access to the research records will be limited to the researchers.

What if I choose to not take part or leave the study?
• Taking part in the study is voluntary.
• You are free to leave the study at any time, for whatever reason.
• You will not be penalized or lose benefits for not taking part.
• You will not be penalized or lose benefits from the Human Rights and International Justice Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala if you stop taking part in the study. Thus the form of compensation for this study, that is the benefits of being connected to an advocacy center in Guatemala, will still be available should you choose to leave the study.

Will I be asked to leave the Study?
• We ask that you participate to the best of your ability.
• If you are unable to continue participation, then you will no longer need to participate or be asked to participate in this study.
• If you are unable to participate in the interview process, the researcher or principal investigator will withdraw you from the study.
Who can I contact if I have any questions?
• You can contact Rachel Hershberg who is the researcher in charge of this study. Her number is 502-445-2421. You can also contact Brinton Lykes, another researcher involved in this project, at 617-552-0670.
• If you have any questions about your rights as a person taking part in the study, you may call: Director, Office for Human Research Participant Protection, BC at (617-552-4778), or irb@bc.edu.

Will I get a copy of this consent form?
• Yes, you can keep it for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:
• I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form.
• I have been encouraged to ask questions.
• I have received answers to my questions.
• I give my consent to take part in this study.
• I give my consent to tape record my participation in this study.
• I understand that my name will not be on the audiotapes, interview transcripts, or final report.
• I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

If you consent to participate in this study, please give your oral consent. You are not required to sign a document or provide us with your name. Please note that Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by the Boston College IRB or Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research.
Título: Familias transnacionales en el siglo 21st: Un análisis de relaciones familiares bajo la amenaza de inmigración y deportación

¿Por qué he sido invitado a participar en este estudio?
- Porque es un adulto latinoamericano y ha sido afectado directamente por las leyes de deportación en los EEUU.
- Porque tiene, por lo menos, 18 años de edad.
- Porque es un padre/una madre y tiene hijos.
- Porque tal vez esté interesado/a en compartir lo que piensa y se sienta acerca de las leyes de deportación y las consecuencias de las leyes para las familias y comunidades latinoamericanas.

¿Qué tengo que hacer primero?
- Antes de estar de acuerdo en participar, por favor lea esta carta de consentimiento completamente. Por Favor, pregunte cualquier duda que tenga durante este proceso.

¿Sobre qué trata este estudio?
- Este estudio tiene como objetivo aprender de las experiencias de las familias latinoamericanas en cuanto al impacto de las leyes de deportación. Queremos entender sus experiencias en sus propias palabras.
- Específicamente, nos interesan sus pensamientos sobre: los efectos del sistema de deportación en las familias y comunidades.

¿Quién participará en el estudio?
- 10 Familias Maya-Guatemaltecos cuyos algunos miembros (incluyendo abuelos, padres, tíos y/o hijos y/o hermanos) viven en los EEUU y otros viven en Zacualpa, Guatemala simultáneamente.

Si decido participar en el estudio, ¿qué tengo que hacer?
- Participar en una entrevista inicial con duración aproximada de 60 minutos.
- Participar en una segunda entrevista, también con duración aproximada de 60 minutos.
- Si no quiere contestar o comentar sobre algún tema en específico, tiene la libertad de no hacerlo.
- Autorizar que se audio graban la entrevista.

Si no desea que sus respuestas o comentarios sean grabados, favor de decirlo para que no sea grabada su participación.
Si no desea que una respuesta o comentario sea grabado, favor de decirlo en el momento y no sea grabada.
- Si le interesa y nos da su permiso, nos gustaría tomarte una foto para tener documentación para usar en futuras presentaciones y publicaciones, que nos ayude a mejor describir las circunstancias de vida en Guatemala.
- Con su permiso, vamos a presentar los resultados de esta investigación en las reuniones o en los artículos publicados.
¿Cuáles son los riesgos que existen en participar en este estudio?
• Existe un mínimo de riesgo. Sin embargo, puede ser que se sienta molestad/a o ansioso/a durante la entrevista. Si la entrevista toca a un tema sensible, y quisiera hablar con un profesional, le podemos referir a servicios de salud mental en su comunidad.
• El estudio también puede incluir otros riesgos que se desconoce en este momento.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios en participar en este estudio?
• Tendrá la oportunidad de expresar sus experiencias de la deportación en un lugar seguro.
• La investigadora le dará información sobre el proyecto de derechos humanos e inmigración, una colaboración entre el centro de derechos humanos y justicia internacional y las hermanas franciscanas.

¿Cómo protegida la información dicha en este estudio?
• Vamos a hacer todo lo posible para mantener los registros de la investigación de este estudio confidencial, pero no puede ser garantizada.
• La información y fotografías de este estudio permanecerá guardado y de forma privada en un archivero cerrado con llave.
• En las transcripciones y grabaciones, no se incluirán ninguno de los nombres de los participantes ni los nombres mencionados durante la entrevista.
• Las grabaciones y las transcripciones serán guardados de manera separada una de la otra, en diferentes espacios, ambos en archiveros cerrados con llave. Esta información permanecerá guardada en la oficina de la Investigadora Principal de este estudio.
• El acceso a esta información es limitada a los investigadores del estudio.

¿Qué pasa si decido no tomar parte o dejar de este estudio?
• La participación en este estudio es de manera voluntaria.
• Usted es libre de dejar el estudio en cualquier momento y tiempo, por la razón que sea.
• No será penalizado/a ni perderá sus beneficios si decide dejar de participar en el estudio.
• Usted no será penalizado o perderá beneficios de los Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Proyecto de Justicia en Zacualpa, Guatemala, si usted deja de tomar parte en el estudio. Así, la forma de compensación para este estudio, es decir los beneficios de estar conectados a un centro de ayuda en Guatemala, seguirá estando disponible en caso que quiera abandonar el estudio.

¿Se me pedirá abandonar el estudio?
• Le pedimos que participe en el estudio de la mejor manera posible.
• Si usted no es capaz de hacerlo, no será necesario que continúe en el estudio.
• Si usted no puede participar en el proceso de la entrevista, el investigador o investigador principal que retirarse del estudio.

¿A quién debo dirigirme si tengo dudas sobre este estudio?
Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de sus derechos como participante en este estudio, puede contactar al Director de la Oficina de “Human Research Participant Protection,” de Boston College, al número 617-552-4778, o por medio de correo electrónico al irb@bc.edu.

¿Tendré derecho a una copia de esta carta de consentimiento?
- Sí, puede quedarse con una copia para sus propios archivos o futuras referencias.

Declaración de consentimiento:
- He leído (o me la han leído) el contenido de esta carta de consentimiento.
- He sido invitado a preguntar si tengo cualquier tipo de preguntas respeto al estudio.
- He recibido respuesta a todas mis preguntas de manera satisfactoria.
- Estoy de acuerdo en dar mi consentimiento en participar en este estudio.
- Doy el consentimiento de audio grabar mi participación en este estudio.
- He recibido o recibiré una copia de esta carta de consentimiento.

Si usted da su consentimiento a participar en este estudio, por favor, dénos su consentimiento verbal. No tendrá que firmar ningún documento ni darnos su nombre o apellido.

Por favor, no que los registros que identifican, así como el formulario de consentimiento firmado por usted, puede ser estudiada por la IRB Boston College o la supervisión de agencias federales de investigación con seres humanos.
Boston College Assent Form for Minors


ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
My name is _____________ and I am a _____________ at Boston College School of ___________. I am here to ask you if you would like to be part of a study to better understand the effects of US immigration policies have on you and your family. We are especially interested in knowing your thoughts and feelings about this issue. We are hoping to learn more and be able to use our findings to help families like yours in the future. Your parent/s or guardian/s has said that if you want, you can be part of this study. If you do, you will be one of about 20 children in the U.S. and Zacualpa, Guatemala, who would talk about your experience with us. You don’t have to be part of the study if you don’t want to, and nothing bad will happen to you if you say “no.” You will not be penalized or lose benefits from the Human Rights and International Justice Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala if you stop taking part in the study. Thus the form of compensation for this study, that is the benefits of being connected to an advocacy center in Guatemala, will still be available should you choose to leave the study. Please ask questions if there is something you don’t understand. If you decide to be part of the study, you will meet with me for about 30 to 45 minutes in a room in (Place). If you are unable to participate in the interview process, the researcher or principal investigator will withdraw you from the study. I will ask you questions about your family and what you know about immigration and deportation. I will use a tape recording machine during the interview. Sometimes you will draw your answers and sometimes you will tell your answers to me and I will take notes. Some children might get upset, sad, or worried when they think about this period of time in their lives. If this happens to you, we will stop the interview. Normally, I will not tell anyone what you tell me, not your parents or guardians. But I may need to tell someone about some of your answers if I think someone has seriously hurt you, or that you might hurt yourself or someone else. If I think that you might hurt yourself or someone else, I will also need to tell your parents or guardians. When I write about what I learn from talking with a lot of children like you, I will not use names, but instead will tell about what groups of children said or will use another name, called a pseudonym to refer to your stories. We will make every effort to keep the research records of this study confidential but it cannot be assured. The information that you share will be kept safely locked at the university and only the people directly involved in the study will have access to it. However Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by the Boston College IRB or Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research. I do not know if you will feel better because you take part in this study, although I hope this happens. Some children have experienced relief and/or reassurance when they have a confidential opportunity to express their experiences and feelings about family and deportation. Nevertheless, I cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any benefits from this study. While you are talking with me, you can say that you don’t want to answer a question, or several questions. You can also tell me that you want to stop, and then you can go right back with
your parents. It’s up to you. If you want talk with me (us) and help us with the project then please tell us so. You do not need to give us your name or sign anything. With your permission, we will present the results from this research at meetings or in published articles. Finally, we don’t anticipate risks but the study may also include risks that are unknown at this time.
Boston College Assent Form for Minors, Spanish Translation/ Asentimiento para participar en un estudio de investigación.

Título: Familias transnacionales en el siglo 21st : Un análisis de relaciones familiares bajo la amenaza de inmigración y deportación

Mi nombre es ______________ y soy un ______________ en la escuela de ______________ en Boston Collage. Estoy aquí para preguntarte si querrías tomar parte de un estudio de investigación destinado a entender mejor los efectos que las leyes de inmigración tienen en ti y en tu familia. Estamos especialmente interesados en saber cómo piensas y como te sientes sobre este asunto. Esperamos aprender más y usar nuestro conocimiento para ayudar en el futuro a familias como la tuya. Tus padres o guardianes han dicho que si tú quieres, puedes participar en este proyecto. Si decides hacerlo, tú serás uno de aproximadamente 20 niños Latinos en los EEUU y en Zacualpa, Guatemala, que participarán en nuestro proyecto de investigación. No tienes que participar si tú no quieres. No te pasará nada malo si dices que no. No serás penalizado/a ni perderás sus beneficios si decide dejar participar en el estudio. Usted no será penalizado o perderá beneficios de los Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Proyecto de Justicia en Zacualpa, Guatemala, si usted deja de tomar parte en el estudio. Así, la forma de compensación para este estudio, es decir los beneficios de estar conectados a un centro de ayuda en Guatemala, seguirá estando disponible en caso que quiera abandonar el estudio. Por favor pregúntanos las cosas que no entiendas. Si decides participar en nuestro proyecto, te entrevistaré en un cuarto por aproximadamente 30 o 45 minutos. Si usted no puede participar en el proceso de la entrevista, el investigador o investigador principal que retirarse del estudio. Te haré preguntas sobre tus sentimientos hacia su familia y la deportación. Usaré una máquina grabadora durante la entrevista. Algunas veces dibujarás tus respuestas y otras veces tú me dirás las respuestas y yo tomaré notas. Algunos niños pueden sentirse enojados, tristes, o asustados cuando recuerdan estas experiencias de sus vidas. Si esto te pasa a ti, detendremos la entrevista y te referiremos a alguien que te pueda ayudar. Normalmente, yo no digo a nadie lo que discutamos, ni a tus padres. Pero tendría que informar a alguien sobre algunas de tus respuestas si pienso que te están haciendo daño, o si pienso que eres capaz de herirte a ti mismo o a otra persona. Si pienso que eres capaz de herirte a ti mismo o a otra persona, también necesito decírselo a tus padres. Cuando yo escriba sobre lo que aprendí al hablar con muchos niños/as como tú, no usaré nombres, sino que reportaré sobre lo que dijeron el grupo entero o yo voy usar un pseudonym para referir a sus experiencias. Vamos a hacer todo lo posible para mantener los registros de la investigación de este estudio confidencial, pero no puede ser garantizada. La información que compartas con nosotros está guardada segura bajo llave en la universidad y solo la gente que trabaja directamente en el proyecto tendrá acceso a ella. Por favor, no que los registros que identifican, así como el formulario de consentimiento firmado por usted, puede ser estudiada por la IRB Boston College o la supervisión de agencias federales de investigación con seres humanos. No sé si te sentirás mejor por participar en este proyecto, aunque espero que sea así. Algunos niños se sienten mejor cuando tienen la oportunidad de hablar sobre la deportación con confidencialidad. Sin embargo, no puedo garantizarte ni te garantizo que saques algún beneficio por participar en este proyecto. Mientras estés hablando conmigo, puedes decir...
que no quieres contestar una o más preguntas. También me puedes decir que quieres
parar, y entonces puedes ir con tus padres. Si quieres hablar conmigo y ayudarnos con
nuestro proyecto por favor déjanoslo saber. No necesitas darnos tu nombre ni firmar nada
Con su permiso, vamos a presentar los resultados de esta investigación en las reuniones o
en los artículos publicados. Finalmente, El estudio también puede incluir otros riesgos
que se desconoce en este momento.
Boston College Consent Form for Parents of Child Participants


Why is my child being asked to take part in the study?
• Because your child is a Latin American immigrant or a child of Latin American immigrants
• Because your child’s family has been affected by US deportation laws
• Because your child is between the ages of 8 and 19
• Because your child might have an interest in sharing her/his thoughts and feelings about her/his understanding of the deportation system and its effect on families and community, as well as sharing her/his thoughts and feelings about her/his family and living in the US

What do we do first?
• Before agreeing to your child’s participation, please read this form.
• Please ask any questions that you may have about your child’s participation.

What is the Study about?
• This study aims to learn about Latin American immigrant families’ experiences and their perceptions about immigration and deportation in their own words.
• We are specifically interested in participants’ thoughts about the effect of the deportation system on families and communities, the challenges and difficulties that deportation laws create, the resources and resiliency that community members use to cope, and the services and future work needed.
• We are interested in your child’s understanding of the deportation system and its effects on families and community; her/his ideas about who constitutes her/his family; and her/his experience living and going to school in the US

Who will take part in the study?
• 10 Mayan-Guatemalan Families whose relatives, including children, siblings, parents, grandparents, are spread out across the U.S. and Guatemala

If I agree that my child can take part, what will he/she be asked to do?
• Your child will be interviewed by a member of our research team. Your child will decide whether the interview will be conducted in English or Spanish. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes.
• If your child is over 12 years of age:
  - We will ask your child to draw a map of the family with the researcher (Appendix C) and to explain the gender and age of each family member, how each family member fits in to the family, and where each family member lives (in the U.S. or Guatemala.)
If your child is under 12 years old:
- We will ask your child to draw us a picture of her/his family, and to draw each family member doing something.
- We will ask your child about each person he/she draws; whether there are any family members whom he/she did not draw; how he/she fits into the family; and what each family member is thinking and feeling.
- We will further ask your child, whether he or she is under or over 12 years of age, about who takes care of and is responsible for the kids in your family. We will also ask your child about his/her knowledge of immigration and deportation and if he/she thinks immigration and deportation effects your family.

- The interviews will, with your permission, be tape recorded. If you do not wish to have your child’s interview tape recorded, please tell us beforehand and we will not tape record anything without your permission.
- With your permission, we will take a photograph of your child—and we may use this photograph in future presentations and publications to better explain the realities of life in Guatemala.
- With your permission. We will present the results from this research at meetings or in published articles.

What are the risks to my child of being in the study?
- The risk to your child in participating in this study is very limited. However, the topics we discuss might bring some emotional discomfort to your child.
- If the interview brings up sensitive topics that upset your child, the researcher will be able to refer you and your child to services in the area if you so desire.
- The study may also include other risks that are unknown at this time.

What are the benefits to my child of being in the study?
- Your child will probably not get any direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, people have experienced relief and/or reassurance when they have a confidential opportunity to express their experiences and feelings about difficult topics, such as the ways in which the deportation system affects families.
- However, you and your child will be connected to the Human Rights and Immigration Project in Zacualpa, Guatelama through participating in this study
- In addition, this study will generate information that may inform law-making and policy in regards to deportation.

How will things my child says be kept private?
- We will make every effort to keep the research records of this study confidential but it cannot be assured.
- In any type of report we may write, we will not include your child’s name or anyone else’s.
• Research records (including tape recordings and photographs) will be kept in a locked file without your child’s name in the offices of the Principle Investigator of this project.
• Access to the research records will be limited to the researchers.

What if I choose to not to allow my child to take part or leave the study?
• The decision to allow your child to take part in the study is voluntary.
• If you choose not to allow your child to take part, it will not affect your child.
• You and your child are free to leave the study at any time, for whatever reason.
• Neither you or your child will be penalized or lose compensation benefits from the Human Rights and International Justice Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala if you stop taking part in the study. Thus the form of compensation for this study, that is the benefits of being connected to an advocacy center in Guatemala, will still be available should you choose to leave the study.

Will my child be asked to leave the study?
• We ask that your child participates to the best of her/his ability.
• If your child is unable to continue participation, then your child will no longer participate.
• If your child is unable to participate in the interview process, the PI will withdraw him or her from the study.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?
You can contact Rachel Hershberg, who is the researcher in charge of this study. Her number is 502-445-2421. You can also contact Dr. Brinton Lykes, another researcher involved in this project, at 617-552-0670. If you have any questions about your parental rights or your child’s rights as a person taking part in the study, you may call: Director, Office for Human Research Participant Protection, BC at (617)552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.
Will I get a copy of this consent form?
• Yes, you can keep it for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:
• I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form.
• I have been encouraged to ask questions.
• I have received answers to my questions.
• I give my consent for my child to take part in this study.
• I give my consent to tape record my child’s participation in this study.
• I understand that my child’s name will not be on the audiotapes, interview transcripts, or final report.
• I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.
If you consent to participate in this study, please give your oral consent. You are not required to sign a document or provide us with your name.

Please note that Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by the Boston College IRB or Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research.
Título: Familias transnacionales en el siglo 21st : Un análisis de relaciones familiares bajo la amenaza de inmigración y deportación

¿Por qué ha sido mi hijo/a invitado/a a participar en este estudio?
- Porque su hijo/a es inmigrante latinoamericano/a, o hijo/a de padres inmigrantes y latinoamericanos.
- Porque la familia de su hijo/a ha sido afectado directamente por las leyes de deportación en los EEUU.
- Porque su hijo/a tiene entre 8 y 19 años de edad.
- Porque tal vez su hijo/a esté interesado/a en compartir lo que piensa y siente acerca de las leyes de deportación y las consecuencias de las leyes para las familias y comunidades latinoamericanas.

¿Qué tengo que hacer primero?
- Antes de estar de acuerdo en que su hijo/a participe por favor lea esta carta de consentimiento completamente.
- Por favor, pregunte cualquier duda que tenga durante este proceso.

¿Sobre qué trata este estudio?
- Este estudio tiene como objetivo aprender de las experiencias de las familias latinoamericanas en cuanto al impacto de las leyes de deportación. Queremos entender sus experiencias en sus propias palabras.
- Especificamente, nos interesa sus pensamientos sobre: los efectos del sistema de deportación en las familias y comunidades; los desafíos y dificultades creados por este sistema; los recursos y las resiliencia de la comunidad; y los servicios que necesita la comunidad latinoamericana.
- Estamos interesados en: cómo su hijo/a percibe el sistema de deportación y los efectos en las familias y con su comunidad desde su propia perspectiva, Quién forma parte de su familia; y las experiencias de el/ella de vivir y asistir a la escuela en los EEUU.

¿Quién participará en el estudio?
- 10 Familias Maya-Guatemaltecos cuyos algunos miembros (incluyendo abuelos, padres, tíos y/o hijos y /o hermanos) viven en los EEUU y otros viven en Zacualpa, Guatemala simultáneamente.

Si decido que mi hijo/a participe en el estudio, ¿qué le pedirán hacer?
- Su hijo/a será entrevistado/a por un miembro de nuestro equipo de investigación. Su hijo/a decidirá si la entrevista será realizada en inglés o español. Esta entrevista durará aproximadamente 45 minutos.

*Si su hijo/a tiene mayor de 12 años:
En conjunto con la investigadora, le pediremos que su hijo/a cree un mapa de su familia. En el mapa le pediremos que describa el género, edad, posición familiar y localización actual (EEUU o Guatemala) de cada familiar en el mapa.

*Si su hijo/a tiene menor de 12 años, le pediremos que su hijo dibuje un dibujo de su familia la cual incluye cada miembro de la familia haciendo algo.

- Le pediremos a su hijo/a sobre cada persona que dibuje, sobre aquellos familiares que no inlcuyó en el dibujo, cómo cada persona esta relacionada a la familia.

*Para niños de todas edades.

- Le preguntaremos sobre quien cuida y esta acargo de los niños y jóvenes en su familia.

- Le preguntaremos a su hijo/a sobre su conocimiento de imigración y deportación y cómo esto afecta a su familia.

- Con su permiso, vamos a presentar los resultados de esta investigación en las reuniones o en los artículos publicados
- La entrevista, con su permiso, será audio grabado.
- Con su permiso, nos gustaría tomarte una foto de su hijo para tener documentación para usar en futuras presentaciones y publicaciones, que nos ayude a mejor describir las circunstancias de vida en Guatemala.

¿Cuáles son los riesgos que existen para mi hijo/a al participar en este estudio?

- Existe un mínimo de riesgo. Sin embargo, puede ser que su hijo/a sienta molestado/a o un poco ansioso/a durante la entrevista.
- Si durante la entrevista se toca un tema sensible, y él/ella quisiera hablar con un profesional, le podemos referir a los servicios de salud mental en su comunidad.
- El estudio también puede incluir otros riesgos que se desconoce en este momento.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios para mi hijo/a al participar en este estudio?

- Su hijo/a probablemente no conseguirá ningún beneficio directo al tomar parte en este estudio. Sin embargo, podrá experimentar cierta tranquilidad o alivio al expresar sus ideas y sentimientos en temas difíciles (como lo puede ser el sistema de deportación) en un contexto de seguridad y confidencialidad
- La investigadora le dará información sobre el proyecto de derechos humanos e inmigración, una colaboración entre el centro de derechos humanos y justicia internacional y las hermanas franciscanas.
- También, este estudio generará información que brindará perspectivas diferentes en el desarrollo de las leyes de deportación el los EEUU.

¿Cómo será protegida la información dicha por mi hijo/a en este estudio?

- Vamos a hacer todo lo posible para mantener los registros de la investigación de este estudio confidencial, pero no puede ser garantizada.
• La información de este estudio permanecerá guardada de forma privada en un archivero cerrado con llave.
• En cualquier reportaje escrito, no se incluirá el nombre de su hijo/a ni el de otra persona.
• Las grabaciones, las transcripciones y fotografías serán guardados de forma privada cerrada con llave sin el nombre de su hijo/a. Ésta información permanecerá guardada en la oficina de la Investigadora Principal de este estudio.
• El acceso a ésta información es limitada a los investigadores del estudio.

¿Qué pasa si decido que mi hijo/a no tome parte o dejar este estudio?
• La decisión para dejar que su hijo/a participe en este estudio es de manera voluntaria.
• Usted y su hijo/a son libres de dejar el estudio en cualquier momento y tiempo, por cualquier razón.
• Ni usted o su hijo/a será penalizado/a ni perderá sus beneficios del proyecto de derechos humanos y justicia internacional si decide dejar de participar en el estudio.
• Si su niño no puede participar en el proceso de la entrevista, el investigador o investigador principal que retirarse del estudio.

¿Se le pedirá a mi hijo/a abandonar el estudio?
• Pedimos que su niño participe a lo mejor de su habilidad
• Ni usted o su hijo serán penalizado o perder los beneficios de compensación de los Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Proyecto de Justicia en Zacualpa, Guatemala, si usted deja de tomar parte en el estudio. Así, la forma de compensación para este estudio, es decir los beneficios de estar conectados a un centro de ayuda en Guatemala, seguirá estando disponible en caso que quiera abandonar el estudio.

¿A quién debo dirigirme si tengo dudas sobre este estudio?
• Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de sus derechos como participante en este estudio, puede contactar al Director de la Oficina de “Human Research Participant Protection,” de Boston College, al número 617-552-4778, o por medio de correo electrónico al irb@bc.edu.

¿Tendré derecho a una copia de esta carta de consentimiento?
• Sí, puede quedarse con una copia para sus propios archivos o futuras referencias.

Declaración de consentimiento:
• He leído (o me la han leído) el contenido de esta carta de consentimiento.
• He sido invitado a preguntar si tengo cualquier tipo de preguntas con respeto al estudio.
• He recibido respuestas a todas mis preguntas de manera satisfactoria.
• Doy el consentimiento para que mi hijo/a participe en este estudio.
• Doy el consentimiento de audio grabar la participación de mi hijo/a en este estudio.
• Entiendo que el nombre de mi hijo/a, no permanecerá con las grabaciones, ni transcripciones, ni el reportaje final de este estudio.
• He recibido o recibiré una copia de esta carta de consentimiento.

Si usted da su consentimiento a participar en este estudio, por favor, dénos su consentimiento verbal. No tendrá que firmar ningún documento ni darnos su nombre o apellido.

Por favor, no que los registros que identifican, así como el formulario de consentimiento firmado por usted, puede ser estudiada por la IRB Boston College o la supervisión de agencias federales de investigación con seres humanos.
Boston College Consent Forms for Informants


Why have I been asked to take part in the study?
- Because you are a Latin American immigrant whose community has been directly affected by the US deportation laws
- Because you are at least 18 years of age
- Because you might have an interest in sharing your thoughts and feelings about how US deportation laws affect Latin American immigrant families and communities.

What do I do first?
- Before agreeing, please read this form.
- Please ask any questions that you may have.

What is the Study about?
- This study aims to learn about Latin American immigrant families’ experiences and their perceptions about immigration and deportation in their own words.
- We are specifically interested in participants’ thoughts about the effect of the deportation system on families and communities.

Who will take part in the Study?
- 10 Mayan-Guatemalan Families whose relatives, including children, siblings, parents, grandparents, are spread out across the U.S. and Guatemala
- Informants from the communities, including teachers, members of the church, and/or local government who have insight into the experiences of children and families in their communities.

If I agree to take part, what will I be asked to do?
- Complete an initial interview that is expected to last approximately 45 minutes.
- If you do not wish to answer a question or discuss an issue, you can choose at any time to skip it and not answer.
- Allow us to tape record the interviews.
  - If you do not wish to have the interviews tape recorded, please tell us beforehand and we will not tape record anything without your permission.
  - If you wish to stop the tape recorder at any time during the interview, please tell us and we will do so.
- If interested, we would like to take your photograph so that we can better explain the reality of life in Guatemala in future presentations and publications
- With your permission, we will present the results from this research at meetings or in published articles.

What are the risks to being in the study?
- There is minimal to no risk. That is, there is a chance that you could become worried during the interview. If the interview brings up sensitive topics about your experience or someone else discusses something that upsets you and you would like to talk with someone else about these feelings, I will be able to refer you to services in the area.
• If you feel anxious regarding anything that was discussed in the interview, we will refer you to a health provider at the local health center.
• The study may also include other risks that are unknown at this time.

**What are the benefits to being in the study?**
• You will have an outlet to express your experience of deportation in a safe place, without repercussion, and as an expert of the situation in your community.
• The researcher will connect you to resources provided by the Human Rights and Immigration Project in Zacualpa - a collaboration between Boston College’s Center for Human Rights and International Justice and the Franciscan Sisters. This study will generate information that may inform law-making and policy in regards to deportation and how it affects families.

**How will things I say be kept private?**
• We will make every effort to keep the research records of this study confidential but it cannot be assured.
• In any type of report we may write, we will not include your name or anyone else’s that you mention.
• Research records (including tape recordings and photographs) will be kept in a locked file without your name in the offices of the Principle Investigator of this project. Access to the research records will be limited to the researchers.

**What if I choose to not take part or leave the study?**
• Taking part in the study is voluntary.
• You are free to leave the study at any time, for whatever reason.
• You will not be penalized or lose benefits for not taking part.
• You will not be penalized or lose benefits from the Human Rights and International Justice Project in Zacualpa, Guatemala if you stop taking part in the study. Thus the form of compensation for this study, that is the benefits of being connected to an advocacy center in Guatemala, will still be available should you choose to leave the study.

**Will I be asked to leave the study?**
• We ask that you participate to the best of your ability.
• If you are unable to continue participation, then you will no longer need to participate or be asked to participate in this study.
• If you are unable to participate in the interview process, the researcher or principal investigator will withdraw you from the study.

**Who can I contact if I have any questions?**
• You can contact Rachel Hershberg who is the researcher in charge of this study. Her number is 502-445-2421. You can also contact Brinton Lykes, another researcher involved in this project, at 617-552-0670.
• If you have any questions about your rights as a person taking part in the study, you may call: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College, at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.

**Will I get a copy of this consent form?**
• Yes, you can keep it for your records and future reference.

**Statement of Consent:**
• I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form.
• I have been encouraged to ask questions.
• I have received answers to my questions.
• I give my consent to take part in this study.
• I give my consent to tape record my participation in this study.
• I understand that my name will not be on the audiotapes, interview transcripts, or final report.
• I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

If you consent to participate in this study, please give your oral consent. You are not required to sign a document or provide us with your name.

Please note that Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by the Boston College IRB or Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research.
Título: Familias transnacionales en el siglo 21st : Un análisis de relaciones familiares bajo la amenaza de inmigración y deportación

¿Por qué he sido invitado a participar en este estudio?
• Porque es un adulto latinoamericano y su comunidad ha sido afectado directamente por las leyes de deportación en los EEUU.
• Porque tiene, por lo menos, 18 años de edad
• Porque tal vez esté interesado/a en compartir lo que piensa y se sienta acerca de las leyes de deportación y las consecuencias de las leyes para las familias y comunidades latinoamericanos.

¿Qué tengo que hacer primero?
• Antes de estar de acuerdo en participar, por favor lea esta carta de consentimiento completamente. Por Favor, pregunte cualquier duda que tenga durante este proceso.

¿Sobre qué trata este estudio?
• Este estudio tiene como objetivo aprender de las experiencias de las familias latinoamericanas en cuanto al impacto de las leyes de deportación. Queremos entender sus experiencias en sus propias palabras.
• Específicamente, nos interesan sus pensamientos sobre: los efectos del sistema de deportación en las familias y comunidades.

¿Quién participará en el estudio?
• 10 Familias Maya-Guatemaltecos cuyos algunos miembros (incluyendo abuelos, padres, tíos y/o hijos y/o hermanos) viven en los EEUU y otros viven en Zacualpa, Guatemala simultáneamente.
• Algunas miembros de la comunidad afectado, incluyendo maestros, gente de la iglesia, y/o el gobierno, que tienen conocimiento sobre las experiencias de familias en sus comunidades.

Si decido participar en el estudio, ¿qué tengo que hacer?
• Participar en una entrevista inicial con duración aproximada de 45 minutos.
• Si no quiere contestar o comentar sobre algún tema en específico, tiene la libertad de no hacerlo.
• Autorizar que se audio graban la entrevista.
  o Si no desea que sus respuestas o comentarios sean grabados, favor de decirlo para que no sea grabada su participación.
  o Si no desea que una respuesta o comentario sea grabado, favor de decirlo en el momento y no sea grabada.
• Si le interesa y nos da su permiso, nos gustaría tomarte una foto para tener documentación para usar en futuras presentaciones y publicaciones, que nos ayude a mejor describir las circunstancias de vida en Guatemala.
• Con su permiso, vamos a presentar los resultados de esta investigación en las reuniones o en los artículos publicados

¿Cuáles son los riesgos que existen en participar en este estudio?
• Existe un mínimo de riesgo o ninguno riesgo. Sin embargo, puede ser que se sienta molestad/o a o ansioso/a durante la entrevista. Si la entrevista toca a un tema
sensible, y quisiera hablar con un profesional, le podemos referir a servicios de salud mental en su comunidad.

- El estudio también puede incluir otros riesgos que se desconoce en este momento.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios en participar en este estudio?

- Tendrá la oportunidad de expresar sus experiencias de la deportación en un lugar seguro. La investigadora le dará información sobre el proyecto de derechos humanos e inmigración, una colaboración entre el centro de derechos humanos y justicia internacional y las hermanas franciscanas.

Como protegida la información dicha en este estudio?

- Vamos a hacer todo lo posible para mantener los registros de la investigación de este estudio confidencial, pero no puede ser garantizada.
- La información y fotografías de este estudio permanecerá guardado y de forma privada en un archivero cerrado con llave.
- En las transcripciones y grabaciones, no se incluirán ninguno de los nombres de los participantes ni los nombres mencionados durante la entrevista.
- Las grabaciones y las transcripciones serán guardados de manera separada una de la otra, en diferentes espacios, ambos en archiveros cerrados con llave. Esta información permanecerá guardada en la oficina de la Investigadora Principal de este estudio.
- El acceso a esta información es limitada a los investigadores del estudio.

¿Qué pasa si decido no tomar parte o dejar de este estudio?

- La participación en este estudio es de manera voluntaria.
- Usted es libre de dejar el estudio en cualquier momento y tiempo, por la razón que sea
- No será penalizado/a ni perderá sus beneficios si decide dejar de participar en el estudio.
- Usted no será penalizado o perderá beneficios de los Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Proyecto de Justicia en Zacualpa, Guatemala, si usted deja de tomar parte en el estudio. Así, la forma de compensación para este estudio, es decir los beneficios de estar conectados a un centro de ayuda en Guatemala, seguirá estando disponible en caso que quiera abandonar el estudio.

¿Se me pedirá abandonar el estudio?

- Le pedimos que participe en el estudio de la mejor manera posible.
- Si usted no es capaz de hacerlo, no será necesario que continúe en el estudio. Si usted no puede participar en el proceso de la entrevista, el investigador o investigador principal que retirarse del estudio.

¿A quién debo dirigirme si tengo dudas sobre este estudio?

- Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de sus derechos como participante en este estudio, puede contactar al Director de la Oficina de “Protecciones de Investigaciones,” de Boston College, al número 617-552-4778, o por medio de correo electrónico al irb@bc.edu.

¿Tendré derecho a una copia de esta carta de consentimiento?
• Si, puede quedarse con una copia para sus propios archivos o futuras referencias.

**Declaración de consentimiento:**
• He leído (o me la han leído) el contenido de esta carta de consentimiento.
• He sido invitado a preguntar si tengo cualquier tipo de preguntas respeto al estudio.
• He recibido respuesta a todas mis preguntas de manera satisfactoria.
• Estoy de acuerdo en dar mi consentimiento en participar en este estudio.
• Doy el consentimiento de audio grabar mi participación en este estudio.
• He recibido o recibiré una copia de esta carta de consentimiento.

**Si usted da su consentimiento a participar en este estudio, por favor, dénos su consentimiento verbal. No tendrá que firmar ningún documento ni darnos su nombre o apellido.**

Por favor, no que los registros que identifican, así como el formulario de consentimiento firmado por usted, puede ser estudiada por la IRB Boston College o la supervisión de agencias federales de investigación con seres humanos.
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS- CHILD, YOUTH, CAREGIVER

Child Interview, 8-12 yr-olds, 45-60 minutes

Intro: Thank you for agreeing to participate. I just want to remind you that I will be asking you questions about your family.

1. Can you tell me a story about your family?
   a. [If quiet in response then:] Who comes to mind when you think of family?
2. Will you help me draw a picture of your family?
   [10 minute exercise-child will be given paper and pens and will be asked to draw picture with interviewer of his or her family]
   *Based on drawing:
   a. Can we put by each person in the drawing, how he or she is in your family (as in “sister,” “brother,” “mom,” etc.)?
   b. Where is each relative now?
   c. Is this everyone in your family?
   d. [If no,] Who did you leave out of the drawing?
      i. Why was he or she left out of the drawing?
3. Which family member(s) from this drawing is responsible for the kids in the family?
   a. If child asks for clarity: What do you think of when you think of “is responsible for”?
4. With that definition in mind, who is responsible for or takes care of you most of the time?
5. What does he/she do to take care of you?
6. What other things do you and your family do during most days?
7. Can you tell me a story about one time ______[list person from question 4] took care of you?
8. Are you happy that_____ [list person mentioned in 4] takes cares of you?
9. Do you know who earns money needed for the household?
   a. How is money used for your family?
10. The next questions I want to ask you are about immigration and deportation.
    a. First, do you know what immigration means?
    b. Do you know what deportation means?

[If answered NO to both questions move to Question 14]

11. Has immigration of_____[list individuals from earlier drawing who were listed as living in U.S.] affected your family in Zacualpa and the person who is responsible for you?
12. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in Zacualpa?
13. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in the U.S.?
14. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your family?

Child Interview, 8-12 yr-olds, 45-60 minutes, Spanish translation

Gracias por participar. Solo te quiero recordar que te voy estar haciendo unas preguntas sobre tu familia. Otra vez, gracias por tomar el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy.

1. ¿Me puedes contar una historia de tu familia?
   a. [If quiet in response then:] Who comes to mind when you think of family?
2. ¿Me ayudas a crear un dibujo de tu familia?
   [10 minute exercise-child will be given paper and pens and will be asked to draw picture with interviewer of his or her family]
   *Based on drawing:
   a. Al lado de cada persona que incluyes en tu mapa, podemos escribir cómo el/ella está relacionada a ti? (“hermana”, “hermano”, “madre” etc.)
   b. ¿Donde vive cada persona?
   c. ¿Estos que estan en tu dibujo, son todos los miembros de la familia?
   d. [Si no], ¿a quien no dibujaste?
      i. ¿Por qué no incluyiste a esta persona en tu dibujo?
3. ¿Quién o quiénes en este dibujo, está a cargo de los niños/as más jóvenes de la familia?
   a. If child asks for clarity on definition of “is responsible for”: Cómo defines tú “estar a cargo de”
4. Bueno, con esta definición en mente, ¿quién está a cargo de de ti, o te cuida la mayoría del tiempo?
5. ¿Qué cosas hace esta persona para cuidarte?
6. ¿Qué otras cosas hacen tu y tu familia en días regulares?
7. ¿Me puedes contar una historia de algo que pasó cuando _________[list person from question 4] te estaba cuidando?
8. ¿Estás feliz de que _____ [list person mentioned in 4] es quien te cuida?
9. ¿Sabes quién gana el dinero que se necesita para la casa?
   a. ¿Cómo se usa ese dinero en tu familia?
10. ¿Estas próximas preguntas tratan sobre la imigración y deportación.
    a. Primero que nada, ¿sabes lo que quiere decir “imigración”?
    b. ¿Sabes lo que quiere decir deportación?

[If answered NO to both questions move to Question 14]

11. ¿La imigración de _______[list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa y a la persona que es responsable por ti?
12. ¿La deportación a Zaculpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa?
13. ¿La deportación a Zaculpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia viviendo en los EEUU?
14. ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que me quieres contar de tu familia?
Youth and Young Adult Interview Questions (12-19 yr olds, 45-60 minutes)

Intro: Thank you for consenting to participate. I just want to remind you that I will be asking you questions about your family. Thank you again for agreeing to talk to me today.

Section A: Questions for Young Adults

1. Who comes to mind when you think of family?
2. Will you help me draw a map of your family?
   [10 minutes-See Genogram Exercise, Appendix B. Include age, gender, and location of each relative mentioned by interviewee if possible]
   a. You have a lot of family members in this map: parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, etc. [list individuals from question 2]. For the next questions we are going to be focusing on younger members of your family.
3. Who is responsible for the younger members of your family?
   a. If interviewee asks for clarity on definition of “is responsible for”: How do you define “is responsible for”
   b. So with that definition in mind…who is responsible for younger members in the family?
   [if interviewee says he or she is responsible for others, move to Section B]
   [if interviewee says he or she is not responsible for siblings, continue with the following question, 3c]
   c. What does ___ [fill in with answer from 3b] do to take care of your younger siblings?
   d. [If interviewee has older siblings] Does ___he/she also take care of your older siblings?
   e. If yes, what does he/she do for your older siblings?
4. Now we’re going to focus more on you. Who takes care of you or is responsible for you most of the time?
5. What does he/she do to take care of you?
6. Can you tell me a story about one time when he or she took care of you?
7. [if not mentioned earlier]Who earns the money needed for the household?
   a. Can you tell me some ways in which this money is used for your family?
8. The next questions I want to ask you are about immigration and deportation.
   a. First, do you know what immigration means?
   b. Do you know what deportation means?

[If answered no to both questions move to Question 13]
10. Has immigration of ______ [list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] affected your family in Zacualpa and the person who is responsible for you?
11. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in Zacualpa?
12. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in the U.S.?
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your family?

Thank You!

Section B: Questions for Young Adult Caregivers

5. Can we list who you take care of out of all the kids in the family?
6. When did you begin caring for him/her/them?
7. What do you do to take care of him/her/them?
8. What’s a typical day like for you?
9. Do you like to take care of him/her/them?
   a. If no—why don’t you like taking care of him/her/them?
10. Who is responsible for earning money needed for the family?
    a. How is that money used for your family?

11. The next questions I want to ask are about immigration and deportation.
    a. First, do you know what immigration means?
    b. Do you know what deportation means?

[Only if responded NO to both Questions 11 and 12, move to Question 15]

12. Has the immigration of ______ [list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] affected your family in Zacualpa and the care you give to your siblings?
13. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in Zacualpa?
14. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in the U.S.?
15. Is there anything else you can tell me that will help me understand what your family is like?

Thank You!
Youth and Young Adult Interview Questions (12-19 yr olds, 45-60 minutes), Spanish translation

Gracias por participar. Solo te quiero recordar que te voy estar haciendo unas preguntas sobre tu familia. Otra vez, gracias por tomar el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy.

Section A: Questions for Young Adults

1. ¿Quién viene a tu mente, cuando piensas en familia?
2. ¿Me ayudas a crear un mapa de tu familia?
   [10 minutes-See Genogram Exercise, Appendix B. Include age, gender, and location of each relative mentioned by interviewee if possible]
   a. Tienes a muchos familiares en tu mapa: padres, hermanos, hermanas, abuelos etc. [list individuals from question 2]. Para las preguntas que siguen, vamos a enfocarnos en los miembros más jóvenes de la familia.
3. ¿Quién está a cargo de los miembros más jóvenes de la familia?
   a. If interviewee asks for clarity on definition of “is responsible for”:
      Cómo defines tú “estar a cargo de”
   b. Bueno, con esta definición en mente, ¿quién está a cargo de los miembros más jóvenes de la familia?

   [if interviewee says he or she is responsible for others, move to Section B]
   [if interviewee says he or she is not responsible for siblings, continue with the following question, 3c]

   c. ¿Qué cosas hace ____ [fill in with answer from 3b] para cuidar a tus hermanos/as pequeños?
   d. ¿______, [fill in with answer from 3b] también cuida a tus hermanos/as mayores?
   e. Sí sí, ¿qué hace el/ella para cuidar a tus hermanos/as mayores?
4. Ahora nos vamos a enfocar mas en ti. ¿Quién te cuida a ti o esta a cargo de ti la mayoría del tiempo?
5. ¿Qué hace el/ella para cuidarte?
6. ¿Me puedes contar una historia de algo que pasó cuando él/ella te estaba cuidando?
7. [if not mentioned earlier]Quién gana el dinero que se necesita para la casa?
   a. ¿Me puedes decir de qué maneras se usa el dinero para tu familia?
8. Estas próximas preguntas tratan sobre la inmigración y deportación.
   a. Primero que nada, ¿sabes lo que quiere decir “inmigración”
   b. ¿Sabes lo que quiere decir deportación?

   [If answered no to both questions move to Question 13]
10. ¿La imigración de ______ [list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa y a la persona que está a cargo de ti?
11. ¿La deportación de Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa?
12. ¿La deportación a Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia viviendo en los EEUU?
13. ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que me quieres contar de tu familia que me puede ayudar a mejor entender a tu familia?

¡Gracias!

Section B: Questions for Young Adult Caregivers

3. ¿Podemos crear una lista de todos los niños/as de la familia que estás a cargo de?
4. ¿Cuándo fue que te hicistes a cargo de ellos/as?
5. ¿Qué cosas haces para cuidarlos a ellos/as?
6. ¿Cómo es un día típico para ti?
7. ¿Te gusta estar a cargo de y/o mantener el cuidado de ellos/as?
   Si no--, por qué no te gusta?
8. ¿Quién es responsable de ganar el dinero que se necesita para la casa?
   b. ¿Cómo se usa ese dinero en tu familia?

9. Estas próximas preguntas tratan sobre la imigración y deportación.
   c. Primero que nada, ¿sabes lo que quiere decir “imigración”
   d. ¿Sabes lo que quiere decir deportación?

[Only if responded NO to both Questions 11 and 12, move to Question 15]

12. ¿La imigración de ______ [list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa y el cuidado de tus hermanos/as?
15. ¿La deportación a Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa?
16. ¿La deportación a Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia viviendo en los EEUU?
17. ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que me quieres contar de tu familia que me puede ayudar a mejor entender a tu familia?

¡Gracias!
Adult Caregivers, Parents and Alternative Caregivers  [60-90 minutes]

1. Who comes to mind when you think of family?
2. Will you help me draw a map of your family?

[10 minute exercise-See Genogram Exercise, Appendix B, in exercise, age, gender, and location of each relative mentioned by interviewee is listed if possible, as well as immigration status if adult interviewees know this information]
3. Which family member from this map is responsible for the kids in the family?
4. [If multiple caregivers listed, including self:] What do you do to take care of him/her/them?
5. Who does _____[the other caregiver(s) identified] take care of?
6. What does ______[caregiver mentioned in question 4] do to take care of_____[list kids mentioned in question 5]?
7. How do you spend your days as a caregiver?
8. Do you like to take care of him/her/them?
   a. If no—why don’t you like taking care of him/her/them?
9. Can you tell me a story about something you did to take care of him/her/them?
10. When did you begin caring for him/her/them?
11. Who is responsible for earning money needed for the family?
   a. How is money used for your family?
12. The next questions I want to ask are about immigration and deportation.
   a. First, do you know what immigration means?
   b. Do you know what deportation means?

[Only if responded NO to both Questions 11 and 12, move to Question 15]
13. Has the immigration of _____[list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] affected your family in Zacualpa and the care you give to _____?
14. Has deportation of people back to Zacualpa from the U.S. affected your family in Zacualpa?
   a. Have more people returned to Zacualpa recently from the U.S.?
   b. [If yes] Are you glad people are returning to Zacualpa
   i.
15. Is there anything else you can tell me that will help me understand what your family is like?

Thank You!
1. ¿Quién viene a tu mente, cuando piensas en familia?
2. ¿Me ayudas a crear un mapa de tu familia?
   [10 minute exercise-See Genogram Exercise, Appendix B, in exercise, age, gender, and location of each relative mentioned by interviewee is listed if possible, as well as immigration status if adult interviewees know this information]
3. ¿Quién esta a cargo de los miembros más jóvenes de la familia?
4. [If multiple caregivers listed, including self:] ¿Quén haces para cuidar a ellos/as?
5. ¿ De qué ocupa _____[the other caregiver(s) identified] ?
6. ¿ Qué hace _______ [caregiver mentioned in question 4] para cuidar a a_____ [list kids mentioned in question 5]?
7. ¿ Cómo pasas tus días como cuidadora?
8. ¿ Te gusta cuidar a el/ella o ellos/as? 
   a. ¿ Si no, por qué no te gusta cuidar a el/ella o ellos/as?
9. ¿Quién es responsable de ganar el dinero que se ocupa para la casa? 
   c. ¿Cómo se usa ese dinero en tu familia?
10. Estas próximas preguntas tratan sobre la imigración y deportación. 
    e. Primero que nada, ¿sabes lo que quiere decir “imigración”? 
    f. ¿Sabes lo que quiere decir deportación?

[Only if responded NO to both Questions 11 and 12, move to Question 15]

12. ¿La imigración de ______[list individuals from earlier map who were listed as living in U.S.] ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa y el cuido que le brindas a ______?
13. ¿La deportación a Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia en Zacualpa?
    a. Recientemente han regresando personas a Zacualpa de los EEUU? 
    b. [Si sí] Estás content/a de que gente esta regresando a Zacualpa?
14. ¿La deportación a Zacualpa de los EEUU, ha afectado a tu familia viviendo en los EEUU?
15. ¿Hay alguna otra cosa que me quieres contar de tu familia que me puede ayudar a mejor entender a tu familia?

¡Gracias!
APPENDIX E. FAMILY DRAWINGS BY GUATEMALA-BASED YOUTH
APPENDIX F. SELECTIVE CODING IN GROUNDED THEORY

Open Coding. Strauss and Corbin describe open coding as a process where “the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). The goal of open coding is to uncover, name, and develop concepts by opening up the text and exposing “the thoughts, ideas, and meanings constrained therein” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 102). The data are specifically broken down into labeled phenomena, which include abstract representations of an event, object, or action/interaction that the researcher identifies as being significant in the data. These conceptually similar events, happenings, and objects can then be classified under more abstract concepts or categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which must describe along what dimensions concepts are similar and different from one another.

By closely examining the data for differences and similarities using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), I was able to differentiate and discriminate among categories. Additionally, objects, events, and acts that I identified through constant comparison in the open coding phase as sharing some common characteristics with other already classified objects, events, and acts could then receive the same classification or code (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, through analyzing interviews and the sections of interviews regarding transnational communication processes, I would label phrases used by interviewees as they were describing what they feel when communicating with their transnational relatives over the phone. The labels that I designated to phrases in interviews included: sadness; loneliness; ‘like she is here;’ ‘like my children are far away;’ ‘crying;’ among many others. Through
this process, it became clear that all of these labels referred to the “emotional effects of transnational communication,” and thus all were included under this classification.

When classifying like phenomena in the data with one another and/or with dissimilar phenomena in the data, I also had to respond to their properties, or the most concrete features of the phenomena that seemed relevant (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 203). When coding data regarding communication processes, properties often included “regularity of communication,” and “who communicated with whom.” Thus the constant comparasion and open coding process throughout the analysis enabled me to see new possibilities in phenomena and classify them in ways that previous researchers may not have thought of (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At the very least, this process enabled a more systematic classification of properties and dimensions of the phenomena as they related to family members in this specific population (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Axial Coding.** Axial coding is the second step in Straussian grounded theory procedures and is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by using coding paradigm involving conditions, contexts, action/interactional strategies, and consequences” (p.96). While open coding breaks data down into categories, axial coding intends to put the data back together by exploring relationships among categories and subcategories (Kendall, 1999). The coding paradigm used in this step provided an additional organizing scheme to guide data collection at the more conceptual level. The subcategories of this scheme are conditions, phenomena, context, intervening conditions, actions estratégias, and consequences (Kendall, 1999). Questions that I asked about the data while using this scheme were:
What are the main concerns or phenomena experienced by transnational family members who participate in this study?; What at are the conditions and contexts in which these concerns arise?; and, What strategies do participants use to manage these concerns? (Kendall, 1999)

For Strauss and Corbin (1990), this coding scheme and the questions than can follow from using it in axial coding allow novice researchers to think about processes that occur to most people, which then helps researchers capture complexity in the world. They argue further that their step of axial coding and their coding paradigm leads codes and theoretical relationships between codes and categories to be generated from this predetermined organizing scheme, which then helps grounded theorists build meaningful and complex theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Glaser, the father of grounded theory, disagrees with the use of axial coding, and Strauss’s justification of axial coding, arguing that axial coding leads the grounded theorist to “force” the data to fit into a particular scheme, rather than let concepts emerge from the data irrespective of an organizing and predetermined framework (Kendall, 1999). Some scholars support Glaser’s claim that grounded theory analyses involving axial coding fall short of reaching concept and theory emergence (Kendall, 1999; O’Connor et al., 2008). Other scholars support Strauss and Corbin’s coding procedure and argue that axial coding does allow the researcher to move toward a higher level of conceptualization (see e.g., LaRossa, 2005). Because of the difficulty I faced when trying to move from descriptive levels of analysis to the more abstract, I attempted to follow this step throughout the analysis. Because Strauss and Corbin and Charmaz especially, remind researchers to keep the focus of the analysis on meaning, action, and
process with the use of this step, I found it particularly helpful when I began moving from open coding to more substantive theory construction for this study. Specifically, with the axial coding step I was able to view what U.S.-based migrant parents, Guatemala-based children and caregivers did to maintain ties across borders as valuable family processes and strategies, as opposed to simply day-to-day experiences in the lives of transnational family members.

Selective Coding. The third step of coding in Straussian grounded theory analysis is selective coding. This step allows the researcher to identify a core category or variable among all the variables generated during coding, “that, in addition to other qualities, is theoretically saturated and centrally relevant” (LaRossa, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This core variable should have analytic power because it will pull the other categories established at earlier phases of data collection and analysis together “to form an explanatory whole” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). Additionally, this core category will account for considerable variation within categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). To arrive at my core variable, I integrated and refined categories until all the products of the analysis were “condensed into a few words that seem to explain what ‘this research is about’” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). Techniques that I used to assist in integrating concepts identified in my analysis included writing the storyline, diagraming, and reviewing and sorting memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998.) In sum, to choose a central category in the selective coding step, I followed Strauss and Corbin’s criteria (1998, p. 147), which states that the category must:

1. Be central, such that all other major categories are related to it
2. Appear frequently in the data, such that within almost all cases are indicators pointing to that concept

3. Develop from an explanation that evolves by relating categories logically and consistently rather than forcing the data

4. Be named with an abstract phrase that can be used in research in other substantive areas, which could lead to the development of a more general theory

5. Be developed as concepts are refined analytically through integration with other concepts so that it has depth and explanatory power, and finally,

6. Be able to explain variation and the main point made by the data, that is, when conditions vary the explanation should still hold to some degree, although the way the phenomenon is expressed might look different…one should be able to explain contradictory or alternative cases in terms of the central idea.

**Sequential Coding and Excel.** Because of the ease with which codes can be created using NVivo9, after coding 75% of the interviews I realized I had inadvertently created an unwieldy 400 codes and categories. To be able to reduce the codes to a more manageable number, and to be able to more critically review the coded data and employ the constant comparative method, I decided to transition into Excel. Using Excel, I created an expansive table of all of the codes, indicating from which particular interviews codes and categories were created and how frequently particular codes and categories appeared across the data. Once moving to Excel, I could more directly compare codes and compare the data to which each code corresponded. I was able to reduce the codes and categories to 54 through this process, which eventually allowed me to construct the core categories that linked the main codes and categories together and explained the
phenomena under study. Below is a sample of how I moved through the sequential grounded theory coding and analysis process with five codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Concepts-labeled phenomena</th>
<th>Indicators- multiple examples of concepts</th>
<th>Categories- higher order concepts with explanatory power</th>
<th>Properties, characteristic of category that helps distinguish between its concepts.</th>
<th>Dimension- describes the range of variation in the category.</th>
<th>Axial, focal or subcategory?</th>
<th>Core category linked to others categories</th>
<th>Theory linking core categories to describe process?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving behaviors of US parents</td>
<td>remittance sending, remitting, economic conditions, sending clothes, sending shoes, identifying how kids are doing if they are sick...</td>
<td>efforts to care from U.S.</td>
<td>strategies of transnational caregiving</td>
<td>practical and/or socioemotional; financial or material; consistent or de vez en cuando; enacted by mom, dad, or both; identified by parents, caregivers, children or all?</td>
<td>focal-main parenting process to maintain relationships</td>
<td>main transnational behaviors exercised by US parents</td>
<td>parents trying to be present when forced to be absent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consejos</td>
<td>respect your grandmother, respect your mother; finish school before migrating; stay out of the streets; stay away from vices</td>
<td>consejos as parenting process</td>
<td>life urgencies and moral advice</td>
<td>positive or negative, encouraging or discouraging</td>
<td>focal-main parenting process enacted to maintain transnational ties over time and across space</td>
<td>parenting process</td>
<td>consejos giving is a main parenting process enacted to maintain bonds with children in Guatemala, it can only be exercised and received if regular communication between parent and child precedes it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remesas</td>
<td>remittances as fact of transnational family</td>
<td>remittances exchanges as currency of transnational love and parenting process?</td>
<td>differences in content and frequencies of remittance exchanges</td>
<td>financial or material, frequency, from whom, symbolic effects from different family perspectives (currency of love)</td>
<td>sub-category-transnational parenting strategy</td>
<td>remittance exchanges</td>
<td>main element of maintaining parent-child relationship over time and across space &quot;currency of transnational love&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Shifts</td>
<td>changing heads of household; changing relationships between siblings, changing geographies, marital troubles, infidelity</td>
<td>changes experienced within family systems</td>
<td>changes within families</td>
<td>whose in charge; location of family members; sibling relationships; power distributions</td>
<td>sub-category-strain placed on transnational family system/mixtures</td>
<td>strain placed on transnational family system/affecting or reverberating within whole unit</td>
<td>strain or challenge that could lead transnational families to experience ruptures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G: SAMPLE MEMO

Efforts to Protect?
It seems JULIA made efforts to protect her children before she left and after. This is revealed in DEBORAH’S and GLORIA’S interviews as DEBORAH talks about only realizing her mother was in the U.S when she was 10 (this is an inaccurate estimate I believe, based on PAULA’s narrative), when she overheard a conversation her aunt was having with her mom. She explains that she believes her mother didn’t want her aunt to tell them she was in the U.S. until they were grown and that her mother asked her aunt and grandmother not to, specifically. The kids grew up thinking their mother was in town “buying things.” It seems like JULIA thought the kids would do better thinking she wasn’t so far away.

This makes sense because JULIA talks about the feeling of distance as painful as if knowing how far she is from her children makes being apart from them harder to bare.

1-Protection also appears in another part of JULIA’S narrative, when she talks about leaving money for the care of her children and calculating expenses for her children into the loan money they took out for the trip. Thus, in addition to the 80,000Q needed for the journey to the U.S., she and her husband took out 20,000Q, more, which included money they would leave with their parents for the care of her children.

A question to ask is if this money is factored into other migrant parents’ loan-taking plans or whether JULIA and her husband are unique in factoring in kids’ expenses OR if whether they factored these in because she knew the man of the house in Guatemala—JULIA’S father—was ill and could not work.....

Protection also appears as once JULIA’s dad died, the kids were afraid to stay without their parents in Guat and wanted to migrate and JULIA herself saw “no other option” at that point than to return to Guatemala.

JULIA also talks about protection in terms of the ladinos in Guatemala and how she worries her own mother is ill-equipped to protect her children from the ladinos given her own lack of Spanish.

2- JULIANNA’S Anguish may be tied to her inability to protect her daughter by being absent which affected her already horrible experience of violence by an uncle and having no family members believe her. JULIANNA was able to do something to help her daughter—she talked to her brothers who lived in another state along the Eastern Seabord, and because they owned the house in which JESSICA, her grandparents, sister, aunt, and the abusive uncle were living, they kicked the uncle and aunt off the property. Is this enacting effort to protect from afar? Is it effective?

Updated December 10, 2010
**What is protection in “normative” parenting?**

Protection when it comes to parenting can be defined as parents looking out for their children, making sure they are staying out of harms way...staying save...can a parent engage in protective parenting practices transnationally???.to some extent. Protection is one of the main characteristics of parenting as defined in the US and when a parent is no longer able to protect defenseless children from harm (and/or are the ones causing the harm in some instances…) the State takes kids away from parents and deems parents unfit.

However…as woman from Heller school said in beginning of program (2007)- authorities in foster system believe its best to keep children who become wards of the state in contact with parents…which suggests parenting involves other important behaviors, comforts, etc. besides protection---

**WHAT IS TRANSNATIONAL PARENTING? What’s the function?**

NINA is quick to explain that having her father in the US es no tan dura porque el manda dinero siempre y llama siempre….no como otros ninos… JULIA can try to protect DEBORAH from mixing with ladinos over the phone and offers consejos but this sort of parenting would no doubt be more effective if JULIA was in Guatemala and could keep a more watchful eye over DEBORAH….

While parents make efforts to protect children transnationally, it seems they often fail as was the case with JESSICA. Although, when mother found out about the abuse she worked with relatives in US to help daughter cope by moving uncle out of house…still lives on same property however

Updated January 12, 2011