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Homelessness and Migration at the Edge of America: Transnational Mobility and Survival on the Streets of El Paso

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HOMELESSNESS AND MIGRATION AT THE EDGE OF AMERICA:
TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY AND SURVIVAL IN THE
STREETS OF EL PASO

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, Emma and Hector for believing in me and encouraging my inquisitive nature as a child. My academic career began as a small child when I asked “why” and you sent me to the encyclopedia to research my questions, only to have me run back to you in excitement and recite what I had found. Your patience in listening to me recite and debate what I found in books was endless and always encouraging. This degree is as much both of yours as it is mine.

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TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY AND SURVIVAL IN THE
STREETS OF EL PASO

by

JOSUÉ GILBERTO LACHICA, B. A.

THESIS

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Abstract

This study examined both homelessness and migration, as they pertain to border transnationalism, by addressing the social phenomena of homelessness as it is theoretically and fundamentally viewed in both the U.S. and Mexico, as well as the border region between. This thesis compares the phenomena of homelessness within the cross-border shared experience of migration between Mexico and the United States. There is limited sociological research that simultaneously studies homelessness and migration, but migrants experiencing homelessness and homeless people migrating has often co-existed. This study attempts to address this limitation in the literature.

As with many things along the U.S.–Mexico border region, a cross-pollination of ideas, mechanisms and cultures collide to create a medley of overarching and often new forms of living. This study attempts to capture these transnational interactions as they are played out in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. This thesis brings together over two years of data collection using a mixed method approach to develop a nuanced ethnographic and statistical description of homelessness, migration, and transnational practices as they come together along the U.S. – Mexico border.

If homeless demographics, including ethnicity among others, differ between regions, how society attempts to address homelessness must not be seen as a national issue needing national attention but rather a national issue needing regional attention. With the overall population of the United States moving towards a minority-majority population, the understanding of how the future demographic changes will affect poverty is increasingly important.

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Introduction

“The heterogeneity of the borderlands population is revealed in the great variations found in the national - transnational dichotomy. At one extreme are individuals who live on the border but are largely unaffected by it, and on the other are persons who very lives personify the borderlands milieu.”

Oscar J. Martinez (1994)

This study brings together the research fields of homelessness, migration, and transnationalism, and contributes to them by uncovering and addressing the similarities experienced by members of all categorical groups. This study discusses the often “invisible” and “hard to reach” populations of undocumented migrants, marginalized Hispanic citizens without stable housing who are ultimately undercounted in the decennial U.S. Census, and various other homeless borderlanders. This research attempts to penetrate the complexities that come to a head on the U.S. – Mexico border by analyzing cultural, national, and spatial marginalization through transnational practices found within the homeless population on the border.

By going beyond the stereotypes of “the immigrant” and “the homeless person”, this study looks at people living in the border city of El Paso, Texas, who do not fit neatly into either of these exclusive categories. In the last decades, little has been written linking the theories and the contemporary processes of migration and homelessness with transnationalism. Research shows that most street homeless people in American cities were not born in those same cities, meaning that they are internal migrants, but little has been made out of this important empirical fact. Furthermore, migrants and homeless individuals often share neighborhoods and public spaces a (Forthcoming: Lachica, Beck, & Castaneda, Forthcoming). What are the implications of this spatial overlap? How do political and social institutions reconcile the similarities and differences between homelessness, internal and international migration, and transnational populations in the contemporary United States? To what degree are

homeless Americans as vulnerable as international immigrants and vice versa? Furthermore, how do transnational practices shape homeless populations in the US-Mexico Border region?

This study analyzes 291 ethno-surveys of homeless people conducted in 2011 through 2012, leveraging eight years of social service and fieldwork conducted by the author in migrant and homeless communities. All surveys were conducted in the city of El Paso, Texas. A mixed-method approach was used for this study. Through a negative-case methodology lens, the study demonstrates theoretical and methodological problems with classical studies of immigrants and homeless people.

This study introduces homelessness as it pertains to immigrants by discussing the homelessness experienced by some international immigrants (permanent residents, undocumented, and various other mixed status groups), multigenerational migrants, monolingual populations, and more. While those who work closely with homeless borderlanders can easily lay witness to the nuances and particulars of homelessness on the border; political, academic, and social institutions often fail to recognize the rich nature of borders as it pertains to homelessness. This study will introduce particular components of homelessness on the U.S – Mexico border, as they pertain to transnationalism.

Various types of homelessness can be found in both the U.S. and Mexico. Yet, to truly understand homelessness one must begin with the question of what is homelessness? Although social scientists, NGO's, and government agencies have attempted to define homelessness, a just and encompassing definition of homelessness depends on what a particular region deems as who is homeless and who is not. Such factors that determine a regional definition of homelessness depend on socio-geographical norms, socio-historical types, local customs and levels of poverty. In the case of border homelessness, a thorough analysis must begin with three questions. What is homelessness in the United States? What is homelessness in Mexico? What happens to these definitions as they merge into the borderlands of both countries? These research questions will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

Global urban poverty researcher, Ananya Roy (2003) notes how the disproportionately dominant use of the term homeless in the United States demonstrates the particular emphasis of the poverty of housing in the United States. As Roy (2004, p. 293) notes, “transnational studies can not only highlight different political economies of representation or deconstruct the normalized standards against which we have judged the Third World but they can also do something more radical - i.e., pose Third World questions of First World processes.” This study utilizes a transnational comparative analysis using an interrogative technique. The following chapters will first attempt to define homelessness as legally and socially defined in the U.S. and Mexico respectively, describe homelessness as it pertains to migration and transnationalism, then as it is observed by my fieldwork, and finally as it merges into and observed on the northern side of the U.S.– Mexico border.

This thesis analyzes varying levels of transborder interactions such as transnational healthcare and willingness to visit Mexico, between various types of homeless people that temporarily and permanently live on the U.S. – Mexico border region. By considering migrant generation, language ability, gender, type of homelessness, ethnicity and citizenship; the study discusses how such variables affect homeless borderlanders’ levels of transnationalism and thus a person’s probability of obtaining resources on both sides of the U.S. – Mexico border.

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What happens to the definitions and types of homelessness seen in the U.S. and Mexico as they merge into the borderlands?
2. What does homelessness look like in this border region?
3. Does transnational capital affect homeless survival strategies on the U.S. – Mexico border?
4. How does citizenship and migrant generation impact transnational capital?

Chapter 1: Methods

1.1 - Ethno-surveys & Sample Population

A total of 291 homeless people living within the El Paso, Texas, County were surveyed for this study. The only restriction as to what homeless people could be interviewed was that of physical presence within the city limits of El Paso. A large portion of our sample was interviewed within the city limits and specifically within the central areas of El Paso yet because the city of El Paso is situated along both the U.S. – México border and the Texas-New México state boundary, therefore it was expected that a number of our Hispanic and homeless respondents would be mobile (living, working, school) between the bordering cities of El Paso, Texas., Las Cruces, New Mexico., and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. .

We designed a purposive sample based on the 2010 US Census and the 2011 Point in Time Survey Report by the El Paso Coalition for the Homeless. A randomized selection of respondents would not have been desirable due to the difficulty reaching populations such as the homeless, undocumented immigrants, and migrant workers who are systematically undercounted in the census because they lack a physical address or immigrant permits. Our study consisted of two mayor samples Hispanics in El Paso and homeless individuals answering the sam questionnaire. The study sampling attempted to parallel population demographics seen in El Paso's Hispanic and homeless populations and be as heterogenous as possible. In order to have points of comparisons with Hispanics we designed quotas to include African Americans, Whites, and Asians, and Native American homeless individuals.

Sub-populations

According to the 2010 El Paso Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) census data, administered by the El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, there were 1,200 homeless people in the city of El Paso. Taking a probable undercount and an estimated increase of homelessness from the repercussions of the economic downturn, it was estimated there would be around 1,500 homeless people

in the El Paso area during the year 2011-2012. In order to have a valid number of respondents the study approximated that 200 people or 10% of the total homeless population across the different areas of El Paso we needed to be surveyed, a total of 291 were surveyed. *Hispanic Migrant:* For the purpose of my study I defined a Hispanic migrant as anyone of Hispanic origin of any migrant generation (1st, 1.5, 2nd, 3rd, or >3rd), male or female, over the age of 18, and currently residing, working, or going to school within the El Paso city limits. The Hispanic respondent could be that of a.

Homeless Individual in El Paso: The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act recently changed the HUD definition of homelessness. The study utilized HUD's definition alongside the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. The following is a summary of the more than a dozen pages of extensive definitions found in the HEARTH Act. For the purpose of my study a person was considered homeless if they fell into one of the following categories:

Lives in places not meant for human habitation, such as a cars, abandoned buildings, parks, sidewalks, etc. ("on the street"); You are living in an emergency shelter, Safehouse, or transitional housing program; You are exiting an institution (prison, hospital, detox facility, etc.) where you temporarily resided for up to 90 days, and were homeless immediately prior to entering that institution. You are losing your primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel/hotel or a doubled-up situation, within 14 days and you lack the resources and support networks to remain in housing; you are a family with children that is unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This category includes families that have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 91 or more days, have had three or more moves in the last 90 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment; You are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.(2012)

1.2 - Socio-Geographic Zone Sampling Method

Prior to implementing a data gathering strategy within the classroom a geographical plan of action was designed using U.S. census and Google maps. This study used both the 2010 census tracts, natural barriers (mountains), freeways, and socio-historical neighborhood boundaries. The researcher divided the city (El Paso, Texas) into seven sections/zones: Upper Valley, Northwest, Central, Northeast, Lower valley, East, and Far East.

Once the zones were established the research teams were split into seven groups to match the seven zones. The zones were used to minimize the potential overlap or duplication of survey respondents and to make sure all areas of El Paso were represented in the sample. Each survey taker recorded the cross streets where the survey took place, the census track of the respondents place of residence, and the census track where the survey actually took place. Along with basic demographics and key characteristics our aim was to avoid any potential overlaps.

1.3 - Language

El Paso, Texas, is situated along the U.S. – Mexico border; therefore our project has the unique distinction of having both Hispanic migrants of varying generations to be surveyed as well as bilingual/bicultural student research assistants to administer the surveys. 72% of one of our first cohort reported that they spoke and understand Spanish. This particular border dynamic allowed the surveyors to conduct the survey in both English and Spanish with the migrants and homeless people; thus allowing the researcher to interview a significant number of homeless agricultural workers, foreign-born Hispanics, and other monolingual Spanish speakers.

1.4 - Integrating Student Training into Research

The data was collected in conjunction with Dr. Ernesto Castañeda and with the assistance of both undergraduate and graduate assistants at the University of Texas at El Paso. Integrating classroom sociological research methods pedagogy and *en vivo* data collection created a training curriculum that was integrated into a total of four undergraduate Methods of Research courses at the University of Texas at El Paso. The data was collected August 2011 through November 2012. Data was collected by Josué Lachica, Dr. Ernesto Castaneda, 2 sociology graduate students, 1 public health graduate student and a total of over 180 undergraduate students (4 semesters of classes with around 45 students each). The first data gathering cohort began in the fall of 2011. Each student interviewer was given the option to interview either both homeless and Hispanic migrants, or just one population. Josué G. Lachica and Dr. Ernesto Castaneda trained all students utilizing a combination of methods to insure safety for the respondents and interviewers, accuracy of data collection, and the securing of anonymity.

Given the experience of the team members and their social embeddedness in El Paso, there were a number of key informants with whom ideas were shared with and subsequently piloted the survey. Key informants were service providers, migrants, and/or homeless individuals who have served as informants for previous qualitative studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. They knew or were part of the target populations. They opened doors for us, introduced us to others, and gave us trust and legitimation in the eyes of possible participants. This is a common practice among distrusting, hidden, and vulnerable populations (Venkatesh 2008). These key informants were also able to inform us if we were doing something inappropriate or insensitive to participants. As Singer writes,

“Accepting and validating the knowledge and experience of the target population with their realm of specialization (e.g. among the homeless, in finding shelter and food on the street) is a means of laying the groundwork for the development of rapport” (Singer 1999:152). Listening to

them in an open-minded and non-judgmental way was important so as to prevent any feelings of being taken advantage of alienation, or abuse.

This study utilized a mixed methods approach and an ethno-survey (Massey 1987; Massey and Zenteno 2000), which emphasized the ability of field researchers to draw on qualitative aspects while talking to Hispanics and the homeless in El Paso. It is relatively simple to be trained to ask a close-ended survey question verbatim, but it is harder to be a good qualitative interviewer. As Ulin et al. write,

“In the best of all worlds, interviewers are trained in social science and experienced in qualitative data collections. Unfortunately, such individuals often are in short supply, because few universities around the world provide training in qualitative research. However, we have found that less experienced people with strong interpersonal skills and readiness to apply new interactive techniques can learn to collect excellent qualitative data ... A warm, empathetic manner; sensitive to different perspectives; and an ability to listen carefully and ask insightful questions are characteristics of a good interviewer, whether educated in the social sciences or not.” (Ulin, Robinson, and Tolley 2005)

The class training emphasized the importance of active listening, using non-judgmental body language. The course emphasized the need to respect and not judge informants no matter what their answers were, but to also try not to bias answers by body language that may seem to approve a certain type of answers or socially desired answers. The team was trained on “How to Interview” by following an influential social work interview manual (Kadushin and Kadushin 1997). The students learned to observe and direct their body language while collecting data as part of a conscious effort to do emotional work (Hochschild 2003) and to seem as neutral as humanly possible without seeming not to care. Of course all of this requires a delicate balance in the art and science of qualitative studies and original data gathering.

Ulin et al (Ulin, Robinson, and Tolley 2005) discuss one week trainings as most common when doing public health research with teams. The students were not sent to interview anyone with less than three weeks of classes, readings, and assignments. Students listened to themselves while transcribing qualitative data not captured in the written survey or SPSS file. By listening, students were able to

observe pauses, priming, interruptions, crutch words, and sounds showing eager approval and other mistakes that they themselves may make. The Principal Investigators (PI) listened to tape recordings and transcripts and gave feedback to students about how to improve their techniques. The lead researchers/instructors also discussed experiences and challenges in class, which assisted students by offering points of reference on how to approach homeless people in the street in the areas of El Paso.

Training on the Proper Treatment of Human Subjects

As a key component of the Methods of Research class and project training, students were required to attend a presentation regarding the role of Institutional Review Boards (IRB) in conducting ethical research. A UTEP's IRB administrator came to our classrooms each semester to talk about the importance of the IRB. As part of these trainings students were exposed to controversies in social science studies and to studies that are clear violations to ethics. As well as discussing the importance that ethical research plays and how they were about to embark on real research not simply as students but as research assistants.

1.5 - Subjective and Objective Assessment of Student's Readiness to Conduct Research

Students received a semester-long training that includes becoming certified by the University of Texas at El Paso, IRB. The Methods of Research class was designed to act as an expedited hands-on course. Students were treated as having the same potential for carrying out research as that of any graduate student. Students were provided detailed step by step training on how to use voice recorders, free interview transcription software, SPSS to enter data, and Dropbox to share files. The students learned to conduct social science research by doing it (the way any graduate student would) with the supervision of a faculty member and two graduate students dedicated to this task.

In addition to self-reports from students, The PI's assessed their preparedness for conducting surveys in an objective fashion. Aside from the subjective measures discussed previously, the PI's conducted objective assessments via IRB and classroom tests as well as an in class exercise where students role-played while the trainers observed as they carried out the ethno-surveys. Questions were addressed and feedback was immediately given to students regarding their demeanor, body language, interruptions, and technical issues.

A survey conducted of the students in the first cohort indicated that most of the students felt confident with their survey conducting skills (46 out of 48 students answered the survey). According to this survey, 76% of the students in the course identify as Hispanic. Over 49% are first generation Americans, 72% report that they spoke and understand Spanish. Based on these self-reports, these students indicate their preparedness to conduct survey interviews with Spanish and non-Spanish speaking Hispanics in El Paso. From the students who answered the survey 25.9 report being enrolled for 3 years in college, another 25.9 % are in their 4th year and 33.4% have been enrolled in school for over 4 years. Over 25 % of the students in the class have children. 74% of the students work.

1.6 - Strategies for minimizing risks to student researchers/survey takers

Survey takers were instructed to do their work in pairs in either public places (taking care of keeping privacy by not shouting or being directly next to people who could listen in) or in trusted private areas where other people are present in different rooms (this in order to provide privacy but allow for survey taker security). Rather than seeing non-traditional college students as people coming to the classroom with deficiencies and holes to fill, the researcher found advantage in the fact that many of the students were often life-long members of El Paso. Thus, applying the funds of knowledge approach (Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg 1992) in which we validate their life experiences, and their *metis* or multigenerational practical local knowledge (Scott 1998). Challenges working with hidden populations

as the homeless “are considerable but surmountable, especially in light of the significant potential contributions of good applied research with these populations” (Singer 1999).

Chapter 2: Defining Homelessness in the U.S., Mexico, and the Space in-between

There are a considerable number of monographs both on migration and on homelessness. Yet, current academic literature treats immigration and homelessness as distinct and largely mutually exclusive categories, ignoring for example, international migrants who end up in the streets or who live in inadequate housing. Some immigrants should be considered homeless yet they remain invisible in academic literature or are lumped into studies with homeless people who are citizens. When do the categorical definitions of migrants and homeless merge empirically? What are the consequences of this double invisibility in being homeless and an immigrant? The following chapter begins by addressing the current definitions of homelessness through the lenses of international NGO's, followed by a breakdown of current literature (or lack thereof) bridging homelessness, migration, and transnationalism. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of homelessness in both the U.S. and Mexico.

2.1 - International Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Homeless Definitions

There is no easily accessible standard definition of what constitutes being an adult homeless person or street child, yet various NGO's have attempted to place a definition onto the phenomenon of street children. The following three definitions are influential throughout many international service agencies:

- 1) According to the Consortium for Street Children (2013) UNICEF first defined street children as:
 - Children 'of' the street (street-living children), who sleep in public spaces, without their families.
 - Children 'on' the street' (street-working children), who work on the streets during the day and return to their family home to sleep.
 - 'Street-family children' who live with their family on the street.

2) Casa Alianza (2009), an NGO based out of the United States, works with street children in various Latin American countries including Mexico. They define street children as:

“A term often used to describe both market children (who work in the streets and markets of cities selling or begging, and live with their families) and homeless street children (who work, live and sleep in the streets, often lacking any contact with their families). At highest risk is the latter group. Murder, consistent abuse and inhumane treatment are the ‘norm’ for these children, whose ages range from six to 18. They often resort to petty theft and prostitution for survival. They are extremely vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. An estimated 90% of them are addicted to inhalants such as shoe glue and paint thinner, which cause kidney failure, irreversible brain damage and, in some cases, death.”

3) The World Health Organization defines a street child as:

- A ‘child of the streets’, having no home but the streets. The family may have abandoned him or her or may have no family members left alive. Such a child has to struggle for survival and might move from friend to friend, or live in shelters such as abandoned buildings.
- A child ‘on the street’, visiting his or her family regularly. The child might even return every night to sleep at home, but spends most days and some nights on the street because of poverty, overcrowding, sexual or physical abuse at home.
- A part of a street family. Some children live on the sidewalks or city squares with the rest of their families. Families displaced due to poverty, natural disasters, or wars may be forced to live on the streets. They move their possessions from place to place when necessary. Often the children in these ‘street families’ work on the streets with other members of their families.
- In institutionalized care, having come from a situation of homelessness and at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

2.2 - Literature Bridging Homelessness, Migration, & Transnationalism

Homelessness

The dominant research approach in addressing homelessness in the United States has remained within the realm of mental health, drug addiction, and transitioning to permanent shelter (Anderson, 2003). A dearth of research exists that addresses the parallels and differences in coping strategies of homeless and immigrant populations (Rahimian, Wolch, & Koegel, 1992). Similar to economic international migrants, homeless people often use their social networks to migrate to new locations in search of jobs and economic opportunities. Staying in shelters, motels or with relatives, couch surfing, and “doubling up” can also be viewed as coping strategies for newly arrived immigrants, seasonal migrants, and homeless populations.

There is a robust corpus of literature on homelessness in United States and in Europe. Much of the current trend in studying homelessness is interested in the causes of homelessness and the resources needed to assist homeless populations. Consequently, much of the current research focuses on service-based needs and availability of services among varying types of homeless individuals and families (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010). Multiple surveys have shown the prevalence of substance abuse and mental health problems amongst the homeless (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, 2011; El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, 2011). This has then resulted in generalizations, stereotypes and further stigmatization (Phelan, Link, Moore, & Ann, 1997; Snow & L, 1993). Some leading researchers criticize the tendency to reduce the causes of homelessness to mental health and substance abuse issues (Zerger, Suzanne , 2005; Snow, Baker, Anderson, & Martin, 1986). Some scholars have attempted to better understand the dynamic cultures of substance abuse, mental health, and survivability amongst the homeless in the United States using ethnographic methodologies (Bourgois P. , 1986; 1996; Duneier, Hasan, & Carter, Sidewalk, 1999; Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009; Hoffer, 2005); while still others have focused on how social marginalization and stratification lead to poverty and “housing

insecurity” and their effects on life chances and health outcomes (Venkatesh S. , 2006; Venkatesh S. A., American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto, 2002).

There are national federally mandated homeless point-in-time surveys across American cities that provide some basic demographic pointers based on a survey done once a year using volunteers and outreach workers who receive minimal training. Point-In-Time (PIT) - ‘Snapshot’ - data account for sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night, usually at the end of January. A total of 79,344 family households, and 241,621 persons in families, were homeless on the night of the 2010 PIT count (HUD, 2011)

These counts are presented to the U.S. Congress yearly. Aside from a few publications using this data (Tan & Ryan, 2001), there is little research on homeless populations on the U.S. – Mexico border. Researchers in Los Angeles and El Paso found a Hispanic paradox, where few Hispanics are homeless in Hispanic majority areas (Gonzalez-Baker, 1996). While other research on homelessness in El Paso, carried out in the 1990s, showed a large percentage of Mexican-born and American Hispanics amongst the homeless population (Hatchett, 1999; Tan & Ryan, 2001). Yet it is important to note that the data was collected in the 1990’s and El Paso and the country at large have undergone considerable demographic, political, and economic changes over the last several decades. The contradictions in studies and lack of extensive current research addressing Hispanic homelessness in El Paso and the U. S. as a whole, motivates this study.

Migration

Much of the leading migration literature focuses on the largest immigrant population coming into the United States, Mexico (Hernandez-Leon, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2008; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the term immigrants refers to people who have emigrated to the United States from Mexico and either temporarily or permanently reside in El Paso, Texas. In using the

term migrant generation, this study refers to that of person's generation of migration (i.e. first, 1.5, second generation migrant, etc.).

Little migration research has integrated homeless research. Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Light (2012) briefly discuss the existing disparities and restriction on housing and health care in both homeless and undocumented migrants that lack appropriate identification. They notes the obstacles that federal laws have created in accessing housing and health services due to their dual homelessness and undocumented status (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Light, 2012). These restrictions are designed to prevent undocumented persons from accessing social services but, by default, can affect any person lacking documentation, regardless of citizenship, ethnicity, etc.

Lindquist, Lagory, and Ritchey (1999) address migration among the homeless through the differences between homeless, “movers and stayers.” - movers referring to homeless people that travel/migrate between cities and *stayers* refers to homeless people that remain in one city. However, international immigrants [as opposed to *internal migrants*] or migrant workers are not included in their migration analysis. Lindquist et al., (1999) attempt to fill in the continuous gap in the literature by examining the psychological and social resources, life stressors, and psychological well-being of internal migrant and non-migrant homeless populations in Birmingham, Alabama. Although the analysis sheds light on the important phenomena of internal migration among homeless, the study is lacking insofar as addressing homeless and non-homeless international migrants.

Although there is evidence that alludes to Latino immigrants facing hardships in obtaining and maintaining housing upon immigrating to the United States regardless of citizenship status (Molina-Jackson, 2008), other researchers have focused on the potential acquisition of better housing opportunities for immigrants upon legalization and naturalization (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2003). Albeit Massey et al. (2003) describe the potential for better housing they do note that the increased militarization, penalization of employers who hire unauthorized workers, and limiting of social services

including housing, health care, schooling and employment, generally make life more difficult for many immigrants.

An area of study that has inadvertently linked immigration and homelessness is that of religious social services and activism among poor immigrants. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2008) notes how the last century of Catholic Workers Movement has worked diligently to address issues of urban poverty including housing and temporary shelter among immigrants. Locally, other religious and secular entities in El Paso, Texas, assist migrant farmworkers and laborers such as the Centro de los *Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos* and *Iglesia Sagrado Corazón*, both of which are located in one of the city's historical neighborhoods *Segundo Barrio*.

Transnationalism

Little research bridging transnationalism and homelessness has been conducted. Campbell and Lachica (Campbell & Lachica, 2013) have observed transnational practices among homeless border populations in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Their ethnographic work discusses transnational processes along the U.S./Mexican political and cultural borderlands in El Paso, Texas, and adjacent Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.

Scott Comar's (2010) recently published memoir "Border Junkie" inadvertently addresses transnational homelessness in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. The memoir has rich descriptions of how his life as a homeless heroin addict on the US-Mexico border consisted of almost daily transnational interactions. His ability to use both sides of the border enabled him to obtain most resources that he needed. Although this case study is deeply moving and interesting, it is limited to being a descriptive insight and was not intended to be an analysis of transnational practices among homeless borderlanders.

2.3 - A Comparative Analysis of Homelessness in the United States and Mexico

United States Homelessness

Acknowledging that homelessness varies depending on location, social and cultural norms, leaves us with a daunting task to create an all-encompassing definition of homelessness in the United States. Nonetheless, as is customary to understanding most phenomena, it is best to begin with a baseline and then move onto variations from there. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on July 22, 1987 (U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). Since its enactment, it has had a number of minor amendments but was not significantly changed until the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009. The most notable change in defining homelessness in the HEARTH Act is that of an increased emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.

It is important to note that these definitions of homelessness were created not with an academic or philosophical theoretical lens but instead, those of social service budgetary motivations. The acts are designed to give guidelines to the Department of Housing and Urban Development so that they can declare who can and who cannot receive homeless assistance through federally funded nonprofit organizations. In accordance with most congressional acts involving budgets, the McKinney-Vento and HEARTH Acts are quite extensive. Homeless researchers and service providers, often refer to the abbreviated versions published by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012). This summary includes the four broad categories of homelessness.

1. People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided if they were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation before entering the institution. The only significant change from existing practice is that people will be considered homeless if they are

exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days (it was previously 30 days), and were homeless immediately prior to entering that institution.

2. People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing. HUD had previously allowed people who were being displaced within 7 days to be considered homeless. The regulation also describes specific documentation requirements for this category.
3. Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This is a new category of homelessness, and it applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth (up to age 24) who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment.
4. People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening situations related to violence; have no other residence; and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. This category is similar to the current practice regarding people who are fleeing domestic violence

Academics have long attempted to unearth a comprehensive definition of homelessness (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010; Anderson, 2003; Rosenheck, Bassuk, & Salomon, 1998; Snow, Baker, Anderson, & Martin, 1986; Snow & L, 1993; Snow & Anderson, Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal, 1987). A useful conceptualization of homelessness within the academic field of the United States homelessness was designed by Peter Rossi and James Wright (1987) and further developed by Glassner and Bridgman (1999), who view a difference between the visibly homeless and the precariously or marginally housed. The visibly homeless meaning, “persons who obviously have no access to a conventional dwelling and who would be considered to be homeless by any conceivable definition of the term” (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999). The precariously and marginally housed meaning, “persons with tenuous or very temporary claims to a more or less conventional dwelling or housing” (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999).

Glassner and Bridgman (1999) do well to note the differentiation between that of an “obvious” homeless person and that of a “marginally housed” individual or in many cases families. The difficult reality for researchers and social service agencies is that in between these two typologies of homelessness lies a full spectrum of variation of homelessness. All of which deserve their own conceptualization and research. This thesis attempts to go beyond the “obviously” homeless and marginally housed and penetrates some of the variations of homelessness on the border.

Mexican Homelessness: Callejerismo

One would think that the question, “What is the equivalent word for homeless in Mexico”, would be somewhat of a trivial question. Yet, as with many literal and cultural translations, the term “homeless” is not so easily translated into Spanish. Converting the “all encompassing” term of homeless used in the U. S. into an “all encompassing” conceptualization of Mexican homelessness is not easily achieved. The emphasis itself of what is observed and socially designed to be a homeless person leads to the confusion or difficulty of the literal and cross-cultural translation between what and who is homeless as seen through the social lens of the United States and Mexico respectively.

In everyday parlance, it is common to use openly classist, racist, and moralizing terms such as *pordioseros*, *indigentes*, *borrachitos*. Academic, governmental, and journalistic literature, both in the U.S. and Mexico, refer to Mexican homelessness in a number of ways. The vast majority of references to homelessness in Mexico emphasizes the term *niños de la calle* – children of the street, but also uses *niños callejeros* – street children, and to a lesser extent uses the term *callejero* – or street person or *persona sin hogar* - person without a home. The latter two extend beyond only youth. *Callejerismo*, which refers more generally to street people, encompasses a larger population that is visibly on the street (Secretaria de Seguridad Publica, 2011). The differentiation of whether *callejeros* are in fact homeless or simply part of the poor population who work in the informal street economy is up for debate. A

number of Mexican NGO's place people who sleep on the street and those who work on the street (street vendors, shoe shiners, window washers, street performers, beggars, etc.) into the one category of *callejero*. Although there is a fundamental difference between having to sleep outside and having a roof over one's head, the rationale behind this grouping is that both populations share the same space and often very similar methods of employment. In many ways both populations in Mexico face similar marginalization and vulnerabilities associated with living and working on the street.

There is a current movement by non-governmental agencies and the Mexican government to address *callejerismo* in its larger form regardless of age. In 2013, an alliance was formed by various citizen and political groups which strive to emphasize the need for a human rights perspective when addressing street homelessness in Mexico. The Alianza Mexicana Poblaciones Callejeras (Street Population Mexican Alliance) is a collaboration of 13 agencies seeking to address the human rights of street populations in Mexico. The groups vision is to drive the national discourse so that to give more attention to the human rights, or lack thereof, within the Mexican street population

The urban homeless movement is heavily based on *niños de la calle* and to a lesser extent the adults that equally share the streets of many major Mexican cities. Perhaps it is the unequal research emphasis on Mexico City where the sheer estimates of street children there are staggering - 1,900,000 with 240,000 of these being abandoned children (Mexico Child Link Project, 2009).

Merging of Mexican and U.S. Definitions of Homelessness: Border Homelessness

Both the United States and Mexico have great variations on how to address homelessness within and between countries which becomes more complex as the conversation converges upon the U.S. – Mexico border. It is interesting to note that the socially designed, quintessential picture of the “homeless” person in Mexico differs from that of the U. S. This transnational approach of studying “developing nation” vs. “developed nation” homeless definitions is also noted by urban studies

researchers Ananya Roy and Nezar Al Sayyad (2004) exemplified by the difficulty Roy and her students have had in navigating the rich array of housing definitions and terms found in “third world” countries. Although researchers and service agencies understand the complex variations in homeless populations, the quintessential homeless person in the U. S. tends to be mischaracterized as a middle-aged, white, scruffy looking, male with addiction and mental health issues. The data shows otherwise (see section 2.4 on transnational homeless types) but this characterization of homelessness in the U. S. continues to influence/misinform the social stereotype of what many deem as the urban homeless “problem”. It is not to say that certain stereotypes may not exist in some form, but the changes in demographics and social environments between city, state, national, and international regions must be taken into consideration if one is to fairly categorize homeless populations.

It is the merging of these complex definitions of U.S. and Mexican homelessness that create the backdrop for this thesis. The following chapters will begin to describe the international dynamics of what it is to be homeless along the U.S-Mexico border. The dichotomous nature of borders is found to be intertwined within the makeup of homelessness on the border. This *mezcla* – or mixture – of homelessness, migration, and how they interact with the transnational everyday of El Paso, Texas & Ciudad Juarez borderlands will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

2.4 – Defining Homelessness on the U. S. – Mexico Border

Although a significant amount of homeless literature has focused on how the social environment of an individual affects one's experience of homelessness, no such research was found regarding the social environmental effects of the border on homelessness. Much of the research on environmental effects on homelessness has been limited to negative effects (i.e. health, substance abuse, prostitution) brought on by negative environmental influences (Hoyt, Ryan, & Cauce, 2012; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cauce, 2001).

Having the cultural and social capital necessary to interact with one's environment can heavily influence a person's ability to fully utilize the tools that surround them. In the case of homelessness, being able to adapt to the language of the street and the culture of homelessness arguably affects the trajectory of homeless life. This research has found that the effects of homeless life can be greatly influenced by how one adapts to their current environmental norms, customs, languages, and space. As seen within the differentiation between the environment of urban and rural homelessness, the case for a separate research emphasis on rural homelessness began to gain momentum within rural sociology in the early 1990s (Fitchen, 1992; Vissing, 1996; Lawrence, 1995). If the social environmental differences between rural and urban settings affect how research and social services are implemented, a more nuanced approach to the border environment and its effects on homelessness is needed. In the case of border homelessness the border environment affects the level of availability and accessibility of resources as used on both sides of the border.

Building off of Martinez's (1994) charted framework of characteristics of borderlanders, the following section (see section 2.3) details the characteristics of homeless *fronterizos* - or borderlanders. On the U. S. – Mexico border, a person's homelessness can range from that of a nationalist experience where little transnational interaction occurs across borders, to more of a binational mix, of both Mexican and United States cultures (see figure 2.1). The following conceptualization of border homelessness derives from a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collected from 291 homeless individuals in El Paso, 3 years of field work in El Paso, and 8 years of working with homeless populations.

Much like Martinez (1994) notes in regards to his formation of borderland typologies, the purpose of the following demarcations is not to create a hierarchy of homeless borderlanders but rather to better understand how homeless borderlanders function best in the binational and bicultural environment found along the U. S. – Mexico border. The significance of this analysis lies within the

notion that to best assist a vulnerable group, one has to first begin to understand the characteristics of the group, the individuals, and how they interact with the environment they are in.

Borrowing from Martinez (1994), the uses of the terms national and transnational are adapted to this analysis, but only to the extent of illustrating, "...how people fit into the social and cultural environment of the transnational borderlands." (p.63). Martinez's analysis, though quite encompassing as a whole, does not directly address how homeless people fit into the transnational borderlands. Martinez (1994) understood the limitation of his general conclusions of border transnational populations. Due to a lack of quantitative evidence Martinez (1994) admittedly relied on indirect, inferential, and intuitive means of analyzing the data collected. Martinez's (1994) use of inferential and intuitive forms of analysis, similar to this study, in conjunction with field work accumulated over many years of living in El Paso is indeed limited, but an encompassing quantitative analysis is quite difficult to achieve with a limitation of time and funds. Nonetheless, Martinez (1994) created a sound foundation for further in-depth research.

This study uses 291 surveys to create a foundation using inferential and intuitive forms of data while extending beyond and implementing quantitative analysis to strengthen the research framework. The following section uses the basic framework established by Martinez (1994) and refocuses the lens to describe and analyze how the variations of homeless individuals interact with the growing border region.

2.5 - National and Transnational Dichotomy of Homeless Borderlanders

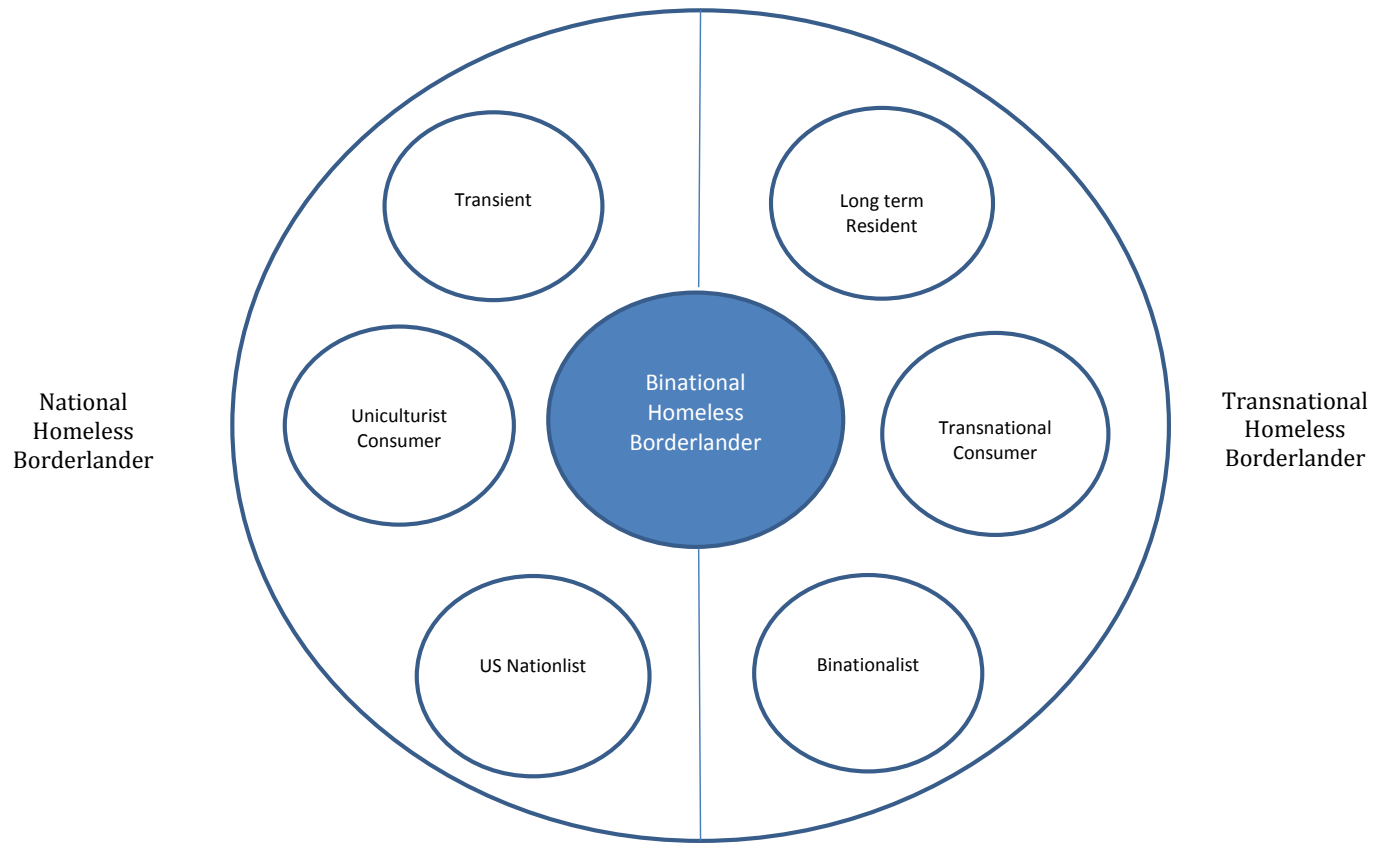


Figure 2.1 - United States Border Homeless Types

National Homeless Borderlanders

The term National Homeless Borderlanders refers to a homeless person who is strictly U.S. based insofar as seeking, obtaining, and using resource. The term resources, used throughout this analysis refers to all things that assist in procuring a person's needs including housing, food, medical care, employment, friendship, drugs, sex, etc. The term resources are not restricted to strictly the essentials of life but rather anything that is in need or want of the individual regardless of the

consequence of obtaining such things as being negative or positive. For example, a resource could equally be housing, medicine, heroin, sex, or clothing.

Transient refers to homeless individuals who are *permanent travelers* throughout the United States or *temporary travelers* who plan on staying in the El Paso region for less than a month.

Uniculturalist Consumer refers to persons who utilize resources only on the U. S. side of the border.

US Nationalist refers to a homeless individual who sees little to no reason to seek resources in Mexico. The term US Nationalist does not refer to citizenship. All citizenship “types” can be a US based nationalist; some due to immigration restrictions and some due to self-imposed ideological restrictions.

Transnational Homeless Borderlander

Transnational Homeless Borderlander refers to a homeless person who uses both the United States and Mexican sides of the border to seek, obtain, and consume resources.

Long-Term Resident refers to Homeless individuals that have lived on the border region for more than one year. It is important to note that as a person lives on the border longer, the more border knowledge they obtain and thus the more potential for transnational capital to be acquired. The key term here is “potential”. Multiple variables are at play when determining how much transnational border capital one has. Time plays a role in determining the potential transnational capital one can obtain but only in conjunction with other variables.

Transnational Consumer refers to a homeless individual that actively utilize resources on both sides of the U. S. - Mexico border. *Resources* refer to all things that assist in procuring ones needs including housing, food, medical care, employment, friendship, drugs, sex, etc.

Binationalist refers to a homeless individual who has no immigration or ideological restrictions keeping them from fully using both sides of the US-Mexico borderlands for resources. This person may or may not utilize processes of *transnational consumerism*.

2.6 Case Studies – Homeless Borderlanders

The following case studies contextualize some of the complexities found within transnational migrant homelessness on the border by bringing to life the stories of two homeless migrants living along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Veronica - 1.5 Generation Female Mexican Immigrant living in a Shelter

Veronica was born in 1977 in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Her mother and father, having been raised in Guadalajara, Mexico, migrated to Ciudad Juarez before she was born. She crossed the border into El Paso at the age of seventeen to be with her husband who lives in El Paso. She remains in the country undocumented despite having lived in the United States for nearly two decades. Veronica completed her *educación secundaria* (high school) in Ciudad Juarez before migrating to El Paso to be with her husband. Despite not being able to visit her family in Ciudad Juarez due to her legal status, she stays in contact with them through phone conversations and social media. Veronica neither sends remittances home nor receives any from her family in Ciudad Juárez or Chihuahua, Mexico.

After enduring several years of physical and emotional abuse, Veronica left her husband a little more than a year ago. She is now divorced. Ever since leaving her husband, she has struggled to find and keep any type of employment. She believes this is due in large part to her lack of documentation

and having never learned English. Veronica only speaks, reads, and writes in Spanish. To make matters worse, she is uninsured but uses clinics for her medical needs. She only seeks medical care in El Paso. She states that her lack of legal documentation to cross back into the U.S. is only in part why she only seeks medical care in the U.S. She also states that it is a personal preference.

Veronica currently lives in a homeless shelter for women. This is the first time she has ever been homeless and is nearing a year of living in a shelter. She is currently studying to be a vocational nurse and hopes to find some kind of employment and become a legal resident.

Fernando - 1st Generation Male Mexican Immigrant Living on the Street

Fernando is a 59 year old-man who was born in the city of Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico and migrated to the United States at the age of 19. His family has lived in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico as far back as he knows – his parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were all born and raised in Chihuahua. Fernando's mother migrated with her family to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico when he was a little boy and was subsequently raised in Ciudad Juarez until he moved to El Paso at the age of 19. He completed 4th grade before leaving school to work while his mother's opportunity to go to school was extremely limited and therefore was not able to attend any school.

Fernando had to begin working at a young age to help out his family. Having never known his father, since he left when he was just a boy, Fernando was forced to work at the tender age of ten. He has been working as a laborer since he was a young man and continues to work in this trade today. Despite the difficulties he has faced since moving to El Paso, he believes that his life is better off in the United States than in Mexico and has no plans to ever return to Chihuahua. In fact, he states that he has no family left in Mexico to visit. They have all migrated north.

Despite being a legal resident in the United States, he has physically lost his papers and is thus not able to cross into Ciudad Juarez. Although he knows that he can seek new copies of his

documentation, the bureaucracy involving obtaining copies without having any proper identification is incredibly daunting to him. His loss of legal documentation has not only affected his ability to cross into Ciudad Juarez but his fear of being deported due to lack of papers keeps him from seeking assistance from local government agencies, clinics, and homeless non-profits.

Fernando has had problems with alcohol for many years and attributes his homelessness to his alcoholism and subsequently being kicked out of his girlfriend's house. He has been homeless for about five months and splits his time between sleeping on the streets, living with his on-and off again girlfriend, and periodically staying with friends when it is possible. Although he is familiar with the local homeless shelters, he prefers to sleep on the streets rather than deal with living so closely to so many men.

2.7 - Homelessness Borderlander Demographics

El Paso's Homeless Coalition performs a yearly point-in-time survey that attempts to capture a snapshot of what homelessness looks like in El Paso. Although the yearly survey is very limited insofar as creating an extensive description, it is nonetheless a baseline for basic demographics encountered among El Paso's homeless population. Despite the collection of basic demographics, the point-in-time survey lacks extensive quantitative and qualitative data. This study implements a much more extensive ethno-survey to capture a more thorough picture of El Paso's homeless population. The following is a breakdown of demographics of this study as compared to the point-in-time survey

Table 2.1 - El Paso Border Homeless Demographics

	El Paso Point-in-time Survey (2011)	Homeless Borderlander Survey (2011-12)
Total	1499	291
Sheltered ¹	1138 (86%)	159 (55%)
Unsheltered ²	182 (14%)	132 (45%)
Migrant Workers Sheltered	38 (2.5%)	28 (1.9%)
Migrant Workers Unsheltered	*	23
Individuals Sheltered		
Male	808 (71%)	73 (46%)
Female	330 (29%)	86 (54%)
	100%	100%
Individuals Unsheltered		
Male	155 (85%)	108 (82%)
Female	27 (15%)	24 (18%)
	100%	100%
Mean Age		
Men	45	43
Women	31	36
Ethnicity- Sheltered		
Hispanic Shelter	64%	79%
White Shelter	27%	11%
Black Shelter	9%	8%
Other	*	2%
	100%	100%
Ethnicity- Unsheltered		
Hispanic	27%	57%
White	51%	32%
Black	22%	6%
Other	*	5%
	100%	100%

¹ Sheltered refers to homeless individuals sleeping in an emergency shelter, transitional living center, hotel, or friends and family.

² Unsheltered refers to homeless individuals sleeping on the street, squatting, automobile, or park.

*Data not collected.

Table 2.1 compares the yearly federally mandated Point-in-Time (PIT) Survey and the study's demographics. As depicted this study was able to collect a much higher percentage of unsheltered homeless people. The El Paso PIT survey captured 182 (14%) of unsheltered homeless people while the research performed for this study capture 132 (45%) of unsheltered homeless people. This study was also able to capture a significant amount of both sheltered and unsheltered migrant workers, while the PIT was unable to capture any data for unsheltered migrant workers. This study was also able to capture survey data from an almost equal amount of female and male sheltered homeless people and nearly as many male and female unsheltered homeless people as the Point-in-Time survey captured.

Most notably, a far greater percentage of Hispanics were surveyed in the current study in comparison to the 2011 Point-in-Time survey. Only 20% of the 291 homeless individuals interviewed were white males, while 60% were Hispanic males. Interestingly, 37.5% of the homeless people interviewed were female and out of 109 females interviewed 83.5% were Hispanic females. It could be inferred that the large percentage of Hispanics represented in this sample population are due to the overall majority of El Paso being Hispanic, but the implications could go further than this.

2.7 - Types of Homeless Borderlanders

The El Paso border region can in some ways reflect the rest of the United States but its proximity to Mexico consistently affects just about most things, including homelessness. To better understand the regional homeless population, their levels of housing, and how it compares to non-border homeless populations, this study analyzed 291 interviews to create an analytical starting point for describing border homelessness. All interviewees were asked to tell us about their current sleeping arrangements. They were given ten options: *Own house, own apartment, friend or family's house/apartment, hotel, couch, shelter, streets, abandoned house, park, and car/truck.*

The following section addresses the various types of housing seen among El Paso’s homeless population. Many of these homeless housing types can also be found in varying formations throughout non-border regions of the U. S. A unique border type emerged through this research; that of the *border transnational hotelier/commuter*, which will be highlighted in an ethnographic case study in chapter 3.

Table 2.2 - Where El Paso Homeless Borderlanders Sleep

	Male	Female	Total
House ³	7	4	11 (4%)
Apartment ³	9	7	16 (6%)
Friends or families house/apt.	18	8	26 (9%)
Hotel	7	1	8 (3%)
Couch	3	0	3 (1%)
Shelter	58	74	132 (47%)
Streets	58	9	67 (24%)
Abandoned house/building	5	1	6 (2%)
Park	1	2	3 (2%)
Car/truck	7	0	7 (3%)
Total	173	106	279**

* 12 of the respondents did not answer this question.

³ House or apartment refers to recently homeless individuals who have been placed in a “transitional living” apartments or houses designed to help transition homeless people from street living to a more traditional housing situation. This type of housing is contingent on following stringent rules (i.e. sobriety, no visitors, etc.) and can be revoked at any moment, thus immediately returning the individual to a homeless situation. Due to the extremely marginalized and precarious nature of this type of housing, these people are still considered homeless for this study.

Street Homeless is an individual who is forced to or chooses to sleep on the physical street (i.e. parks, alley ways, makeshift camps, etc.).

Shelter Homeless is an individual who temporary or regularly sleeps at a night or day shelter specifically designed for homeless individuals and/or families. The following types of shelters are found in El Paso - Migrant Shelter, Agricultural Worker Shelter, Secular Shelter, Religious Shelter, and Domestic Violence Shelter.

Vehicle Sleepers are individuals who sleep in a non-recreational vehicle such as a car or truck. The car or truck can be in working condition or not in working condition.

Transitional Living Homeless (house or apartment) are Individuals or families living in temporary housing meant to assist formerly homeless people in their transition to self-sufficiency. Many cities offer a “transition” housing program for homeless individuals who are prepared to move from living on the streets to living in an assisted living program.

Transnational Hotelier/Commuter is an American citizen or person with adequate documentation that allows them to cross the border daily. Transnational hoteliers tend to work, panhandle, and/or hustle enough money in El Paso throughout the day so that they can cross into Ciudad Juárez and pay for a inexpensive hotel to sleep. Upon waking the individual crosses back into El Paso to once again work, panhandle, and/or hustle enough money to survive for the day and thus cross back into Ciudad Juárez at night to sleep in an inexpensive hotel once again. The hotels can cost from \$8 - \$20 per night. Some hotels can have amenities such as easy access to drugs, alcohol, and prostitution. Although a number of hotels cater to cliental seeking such services, not all transnational hoteliers are seeking such services.

The cycle can be temporary or can last for an extended amount of time - sometimes for years. The cases study in chapter 3 contains a more nuanced explanation of this border phenomenon.

U.S. Hotelers are individuals or families who live in a hotel or motel in the United States. Many individuals and families experience temporary hotel living upon being evicted from their previous residence, fleeing from domestic violence, divorce, etc. Others may be able to afford and prefer to pay weekly rent, while others may already be homeless and living on the street but from time to time acquire enough money to pay for a couple of nights in a hotel room then are back on the street after a couple of days.

Homeless Network Sleeper: Individuals who double up with friends and/or family by sleeping on the floor, extra couches, and in some instances porches and sheds. These individuals are often only allowed to sleep during the night and must leave during the day. They often find themselves having to jump back and forth between various friends and family members, therefore, never being able to establish a permanent residence. Although the term “couchsurfer” is often used to describe this subpopulation, this manuscript does not use this term because of its limitation in describing people who are often not even given a couch to sleep on but rather can often sleep on floors, porches, backyard shacks, etc. The decision to not use the term “couchsurfer” was also in part due to the advent of the heavily trafficked website www.couchsurfing.org, which no longer refers to couchsurfers as homeless people but all types of travelers.

Squatter: An individual who moves into an abandoned building; most of which are not suitable for human occupation. Squatting is more common within urban centers including El Paso.

Tenement Housing: Although tenement housing can be permanent housing, many are rented month-to-month without lease agreements. Taking into consideration the level of poverty most tenement housing dwellers face in conjunction with a lack of legal grounding for remaining in a home long-term, these tenants are in many cases marginally housed insofar as the potential to be evicted at any moment.



Illustration 1.1 - Homeless Camps in El Paso, Texas

All photographs by Josué G. Lachica, 2011

The pictures above were taken in two separate regions of El Paso, Texas, during the winter of 2011. The photo on the left was taken behind an old mill which now lies next to the Rescue Mission. Despite literally being next to the Rescue Mission, a number of homeless individuals prefer to sleep outdoors and/or get evicted from the Rescue Mission homeless shelter. Many homeless people either find the rules and regulations of shelters too restrictive or they often find the shelters too dirty and dangerous.

The photo on the right was taken in Far East El Paso near the city limits. Two middle age men lived in this makeshift camp where they tried their best to design a home with similar qualities that may

be found in any living room. If one looks closely to the picture you will see a chair, loveseat, stove (barrel), a mattress covered with wood, and a television set on the tree (although it did not function).

Chapter 3: Homeless Transnationalism on the Border – *Transborder Resources and Accessibility*

3.1 Transnational Intersectionality of Accessibility

It can be argued that except for ethnicity, most variables in one's life have the potential to be developed, manipulated, or changed over the course of one's life. The variables depicted below can be broken up into multiple levels and/or separate categories within each. In the case of border homelessness, it is more than simply two cultures (Mexican and United States) merging into one. It is in fact four cultures (homeless, Mexican, United States, and border cultures) shifting through multiple categories, that the researcher calls a *Transnational Intersectionality of Accessibility*. The *transnational Intersectionality of Accessibility* refers to multiple variations and equations between differing levels of variables that ultimately blend to create a person's capital,--more specifically, for this analysis *transnational resource capital*. In the case of homeless borderlanders, multiple variables can culminate to give a person varying abilities to access resources and networks. This study analysis immigration generation, ethnicity, language, citizenship, gender, space, and their impacts on access to transnational resources.

Although it can be argued that other variables could be added to this matrix, this study shows that for border homeless populations the following six variables weigh heavy on the accessibility and acquisition of resources via transnational practices on the border. This is not to say that other variables may or may not play a role in the development of transnational accessibility of resources yet the same theoretical model will apply insofar as a person's varying abilities to access resources and networks. Each of the six variables will be empirically analyzed within the subsequent sections.

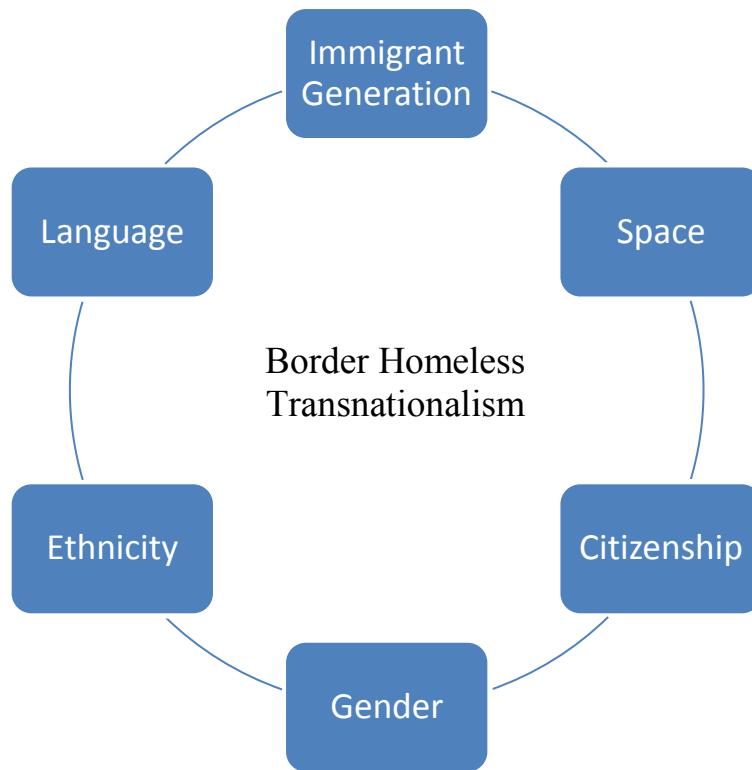


Figure 3.1: Variables Affecting Transnationalism among Homeless Borderlanders

What may be seen as a hindrance to being homeless in non-border cities may in fact be an asset in a border community such as the El Paso - Ciudad Juarez region. For example, being of the 1.5 migrant generation could be seen as “better” in comparison to a 2nd generation migrant in a non-border region that is more culturally “American” and English speaking. Yet, as this study shows, close proximity and knowledge of both Mexican and US languages and cultures (found in more recent migrant generations) could in fact be useful in a setting such as El Paso.

For example, a 1.5 generation Mexican migrant more than likely remains within a close proximity to both the Spanish language and Mexican cultures, having been born in Mexico and having moved to the US before the age of 18. This close proximity to language and culture is arguably an asset in a border setting. Yet, taking the matrix of accessibility into account, a person’s transnational capital stemming from a 1.5 generation status could be significantly hindered depending on their legal status of

citizenship. In other words a person’s accessibility to resources can fluctuate up and down depending on where one falls within all states of homelessness, migration, language, citizenship, etc.

The following sections will address how the transnational matrix of accessibility effects transborder interactions and thus positively or negatively influences homeless borderlander’s survivability. Using the transnational matrix of accessibility as a theoretical framework, this analysis uses cross-border interactions as focal points for measuring levels of transnationalism and accessibility to resources (such as housing and medical care) along the US-Mexico Border.

3.2 - Language

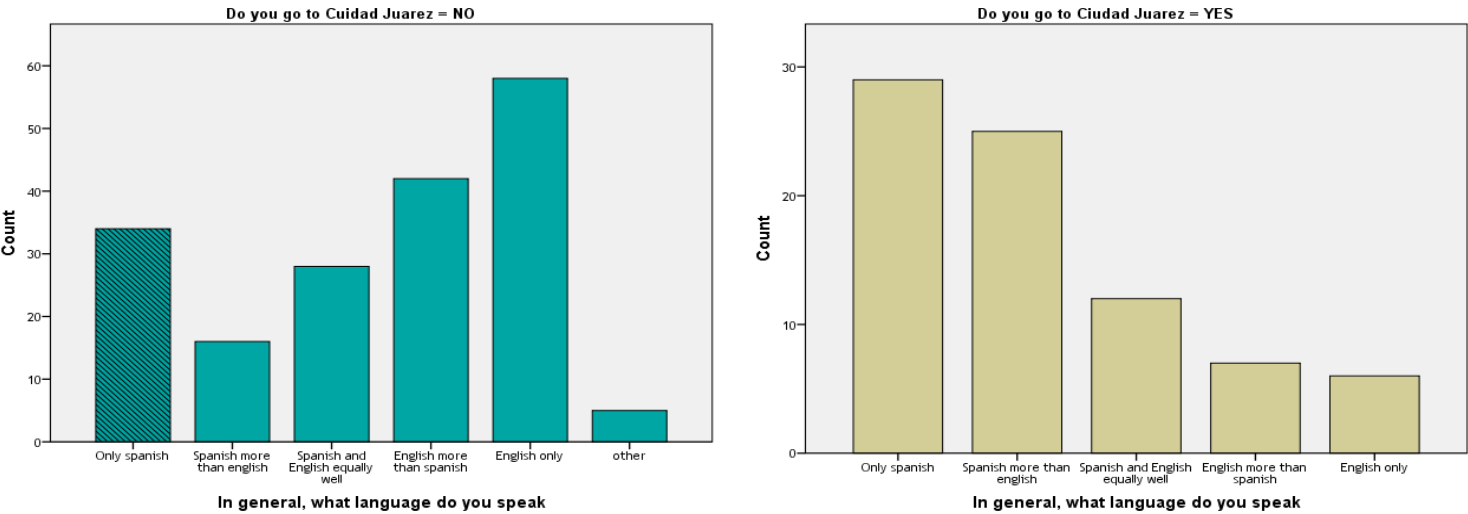


Figure 3.2: Language and its Effects on Transborder interaction.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between language efficiency and willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez⁴. The relation between these variables was significant, X² (4, N

⁴ Language efficiency was measure by asking, “In general, what language do you speak”? The respondents were given 6 answers to choose from: Only Spanish, Spanish more than English, Spanish and English equally well, English more than Spanish, English only, and other.

= 257) = 44.488, $p < .001$ ⁵. Language efficiency appears to have an impact on homeless borderlanders' willingness to visit Ciudad Juarez. The data depicts an association between language and border crossing. The less Spanish a homeless borderlander speaks the less likely they will cross the border into Ciudad Juarez, therefore lessening their chance to access resources.

The only variation in the trend depicted in Figure 1.4 is the monolingual homeless borderlanders who only speak Spanish. A possible explanation for this would be the citizenship breakdown of the Spanish speaking monolingual homeless borderlanders (see table 1.3). The 19 Spanish monolingual homeless borderlanders who are undocumented have a valid reason not go to Juarez regardless of their ability to speak Spanish well. The potential inability to reenter the United States because of lack of documentation is a possible reason why undocumented homeless borderlanders may not practice transborder interactions. It is possible that if they were documented, they would possibly be more likely to cross the border into Ciudad Juarez and thus potentially strengthen their transborder capital. Their undocumented status therefore may impede them from using their language expertise to gain any resources from the Ciudad Juarez side of the border.

Table 3.1 - Monolingual Spanish Speaking

Homeless Borderlanders		
	Frequency	Percent
Citizen	12	18.8
Resident	30	46.9
Undocumented	19	29.7
Legal Visa	3	4.7
Total	64	100.0

a. In general, what language do you speak = Only Spanish

⁵ Other was removed from the chi-square analysis due to having less than 5 respondents thus making a statistical analysis of other difficult.

A chi-square test of independence was also performed to examine the relation between language efficiency and having family in Ciudad Juarez. The relation between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 230) = 73.190, p < .001$. Language efficiency appears to have an impact on homeless borderlanders' having family in Ciudad Juarez. Our data, as seen in figure 1.5, depicts an association between language and having family in Ciudad Juarez. The less Spanish a homeless borderlander speaks the less likely they will have family in Ciudad Juarez and possibly the less family a homeless borderlanders has in Juarez, the less Spanish they may speak.

A chi-square test of independence was also performed (controlling for gender) with homeless borderlanders who have family in Ciudad Juarez with homeless borderlanders who visit Ciudad Juarez. Gender did not have a significant impact on associations between having family in Ciudad Juarez and visiting. The relation between these variables was significant, Males $X^2(1, N = 137) = 27.438, p < .001$, Females $X^2(1, N = 93) = 21.428, p < .001$, Total population $X^2(1, N = 230) = 46.090, p < .001$. Having family in Ciudad Juarez appears to have an impact on whether or not a person goes to Ciudad Juarez.

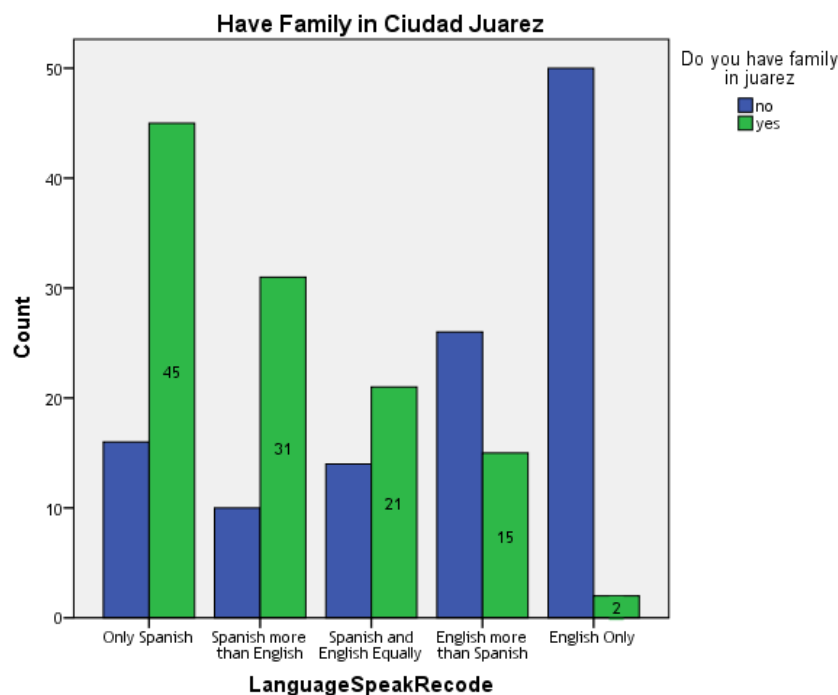


Figure 3.3: Association Between Language and Having Family in Ciudad Juarez

If networks can indeed help bring more resources to a person, does having transnational networks (in this case family in Ciudad Juarez) help homeless borderlanders be healthier? If having family in Ciudad Juarez motivates homeless borderlanders to seek resources in Ciudad Juarez (i.e. medical care), could it be argued that having a network (i.e. family or friends) in Ciudad Juarez may lead to a healthier life? Out of the 80 people that reported visiting Ciudad Juarez, 59 reported having family in Ciudad Juarez. Out of these 59, 54% seek medical treatment in Mexico. In contrast to transnational medical treatment, the 15 who do cross the border but do not have family in Juarez, do not seek medical care in Ciudad Juarez. If this group is already willing to enter Ciudad Juarez why are they only seeking medical care in the US? Could it be that having a family network in Ciudad Juarez helps a person obtain medical treatment resources in Mexico more than those that do not have family in Ciudad Juarez? The data analyzed in this study is not conclusive yet there does appear to be a trend in this direction. More research needs to be performed to better understand these phenomena.

3.3 - Space

How does space affect a person's level of transnationalism? Is transnationalism affected by proximity to the physical U.S. – Mexico border or by narrowing and expanding levels of the spectrum of time as with immigrant generation and migration trajectory? What do these effects, if any, do homeless borderlanders experience and how do they form the life trajectory of a homeless borderlander? Does proximity to culture, border, and migration history has an effect on ones level of transborder capital or border transnationalism?

Scholars have long observed the melting of cultures at the border yet the close study of urban edges that lie within less than a mile of geopolitical international borders remains limited. Turner, Davidson-Hunt, and O'Flaherty (2003) define cultural edges as places where the social exchange of goods and knowledge between individuals or groups with access to different resources, creating zones of

knowledge for day-today practices of survival. Some social environments are more conducive for productive cultural edges to appear (Castañeda Forthcoming).

These zones of hybrid cultural knowledge become far more prevalent and dense as one nears physical and cultural borders such as that between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. One only has to walk or drive from the El Paso or Ciudad Juarez suburban outer zones towards the more urban inner zone, meaning within a mile radius of the border fence, to begin to observe an increase of cultural exchange and social permeability.

It is within the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez immediate border zone, the border edges, that a homeless borderlander named Sonny has been acquiring his transnational cultural capital for the last 33 years (see chapter 3 case study). His daily world remains within this space that lies in close proximity to the physical border between the United States and Mexico. When asking him why he does not venture out into the more suburban areas of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez he explains to me that he does not need to go elsewhere. The social exchange of the goods and knowledge that he needs are within this cultural edge therefore he has no need to venture out and arguably cannot transfer this particular collected transnational cultural capital to further inland areas of the two cities or for that matter in any city away from the border.

3.4 - Citizenship

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between citizenship and willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 254) = 19.406, p < .001$. Citizenship appears to have an impact on homeless borderlanders' willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez. The data, as seen in figure 1.5, depicts an association between citizenship (Citizen, Resident, & Undocumented) and willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez. Homeless borderlanders

who are citizens or are undocumented are less likely to go to Ciudad Juarez. Residents (all of which are Mexican born) show more willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez (see figure 2.5 below).

34 % of the homeless borderlanders who report being legal residents report having family in Ciudad Juarez. While 36 % of the homeless borderlanders who report being legal residents report either only speaking Spanish or speaking more Spanish then English. Is it possible that having a direct familial link living in Ciudad Juarez in conjunction with speaking predominantly Spanish could lead to more transnational activity within homeless borderlanders?

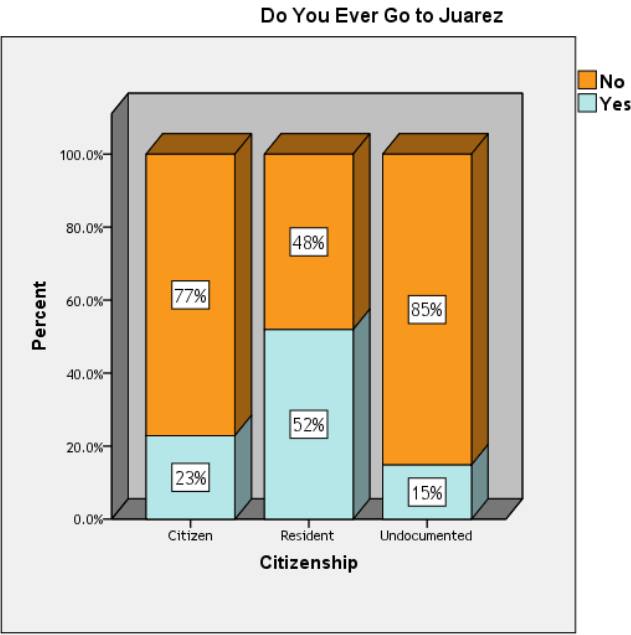


Figure 3.4 - Association Between Language and Willingness to Visit Ciudad Juárez

3.5 Ethnicity

There are currently two leading theories as to why Hispanics are underrepresented in homeless populations. First, Conroy and Hear (2003, p.530) found that Mexican-born homeless people may be systematically undercounted in part because they may exist outside of “traditional homeless spaces.”

Second, Baker (1996) suggests that the “Latino Paradox” found with the underrepresentation of Latinos in homeless counts are more than likely explained by interactions of culture and institutions, where Latinos use personal networks to avoid the streets and shelters. Tan and Ryan’s (2001) study in El Paso, Texas, question Baker’s (1996) theory of personal networks helping resist homelessness insofar as they find that homeless Hispanics may not be doubling up to avoid street homelessness as much as previously thought.

Table 3.2 - Ethnicity of Homeless Borderlanders (a)

	Frequency	Percent
Non-Hispanic	90	30.0
<i>South Asian</i>	2	2.0
<i>Black</i>	21	23.0
<i>Native American</i>	7	8.0
<i>White</i>	60	67.0
Hispanics*	201	70.0
Total	291	100.0

Does ethnicity play a role in whether or not homeless borderlanders visit and/or seek medical treatment in Ciudad Juarez? A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between ethnicity and both willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez and seeking medical treatment in Ciudad Juarez. The relation between both cross tabulations was significant. Where one seeks treatment (US, Mexico, both) and ethnicity, $X^2(2, N = 244) = 11.910, p = .003$. Willingness to visit Ciudad Juarez and ethnicity, $X^2(1, N = 270) = 19.032, p < .001$. Ethnicity appears to have an impact on homeless borderlanders’ willingness to visit Ciudad Juarez and willingness to seek medical treatment in Ciudad Juárez.

Table 3.3 - Ethnicity of Homeless Borderlanders (b)

	Where do you seek treatment				Ever go to Juarez		
	In the U.S.	In Mexico	Both Countries	Total	no	yes	Total
Non-Hispanic	71	1	3	75	72	9	81
	94.7%	1.3%	4.0%	100.0%	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
Hispanics	129	15	25	169	118	71	189
	76.3%	8.9%	14.8%	100.0%	62.4%	37.6%	100.0%
Total	200	16	28	244	190	80	270
	82.0%	6.6%	11.5%	100.0%	70.4%	29.6%	100.0%

3.6 - Immigrant Generation

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between immigration generation and willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez. The relation between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 238) = 25.146, p < .001$. Immigration generation appears to have an impact on homeless borderlanders' willingness to visit Ciudad Juarez.

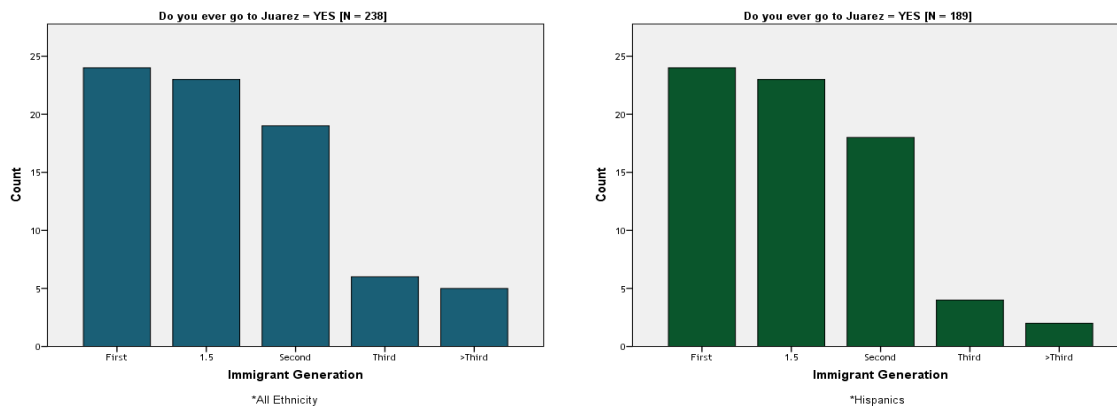


Figure 3.5 - Immigrant Generation and Willingness to Visit Ciudad Juárez

As depicted above in tables 2.6 there appears to be an association with immigrant generation and willingness to go across the border into Ciudad Juarez. As homeless borderlanders' immigration

generation (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) increases their likelihood of crossing into Ciudad Juarez diminishes. This decline in cross-border mobility as a person’s immigrant generation increases could lead to a diminished availability of transnational resources. In other words, newer immigrant generations could in fact be accessing more transnational resources leading to a significantly different homeless trajectory as compared to borderlanders who have been living in the US for multiple generations. 85.8% of homeless borderlanders interviewed who reports going to Ciudad Juarez are newer migrant generations between 1st and 2nd generation migrants. 7.8% are 3rd generation migrants and only 6.5% of the greater than 3rd generation migrants reported going to Ciudad Juarez.

Transnational Healthcare of Homeless Individuals in the Borderland

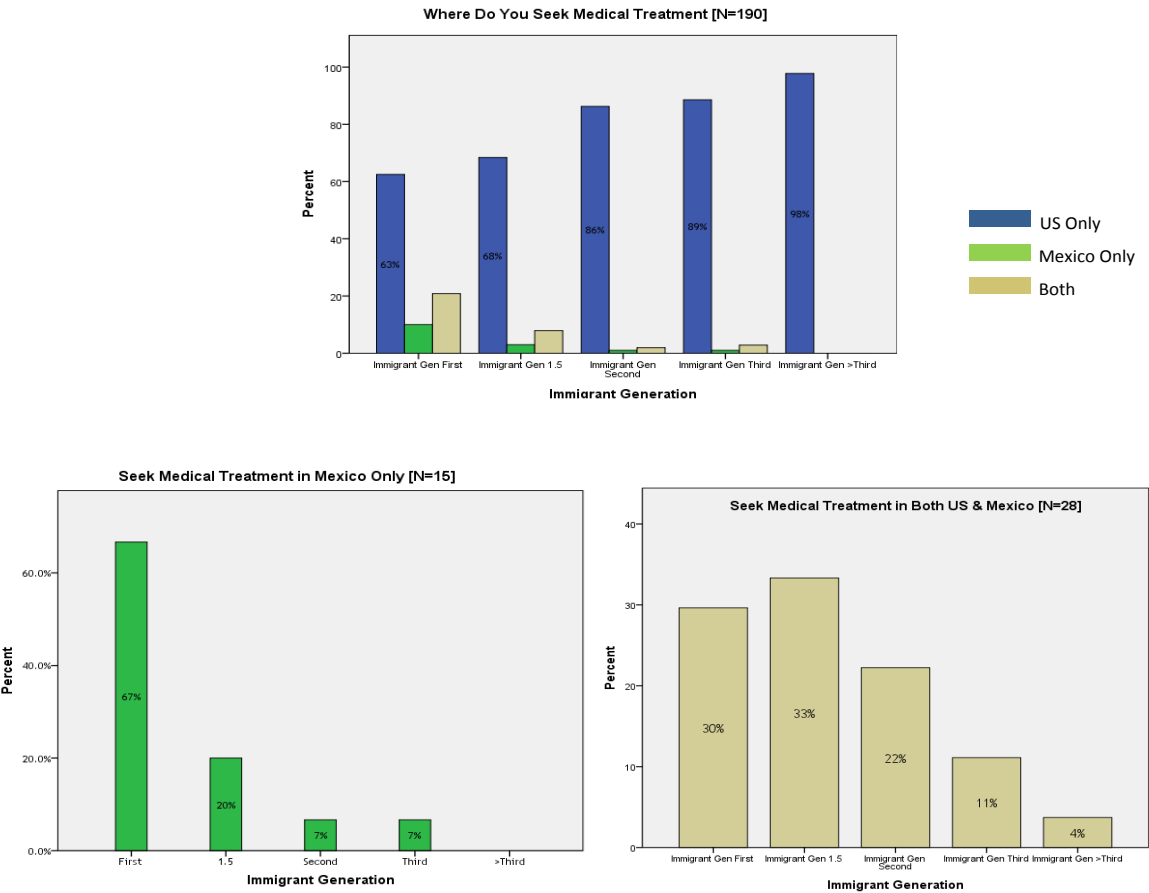


Figure 3.6 - Immigrant Generation and Where One Seeks Medical Treatment

As depicted above in Figure 2.7, the data shows that the majority of respondents (80.6%) seek medical treatment *only* in the United States. The remaining 20% of the respondents who either only seek medical treatment in Mexico or seek medical treatment in both countries appear to be associated with immigrant generation. Although the small number of respondents seeking any medical treatment in Mexico limits a thorough quantitative analysis, a trend is observed insofar as who does seek medical treatment across the border (see table 1.6). As homeless borderlanders' immigration generation increases, the less likely they are to seek any treatment in Mexico. Gender appears to have little effect on whether or not the respondents go to Ciudad Juarez. 82.4% of females and 79.4% of males do not seek medical treatment in Ciudad Juarez.

Medical care can be cost effective in Ciudad Juarez. Many uninsured borderlanders searching for affordable healthcare seek medical treatment in Ciudad Juarez. One might think that a significantly poor and uninsured population of borderlanders, such as the homeless, might in fact seek medical care across the border. Yet, as noted above, 80.6% of the 233 homeless respondents only seek care in the United States and out of this group 85.7% report being uninsured. It is also important to note that 25% of the homeless respondents who only seek care in the U.S. reported declining a medical treatment or tests because they could not afford the co-payment, even though they were insured. Why are uninsured or underinsured homeless borderlanders not seeking medical care in Ciudad Juarez? One possible answer may lie within a historical healthcare issue in the U. S. - Emergency room care for the uninsured. Despite the increase of violence in Ciudad Juarez the past 6 years, only 17% of respondents who only seek medical care in the U.S. report fear of violence or safety concerns as the primary reason for not going to Ciudad Juarez. Although this may play a role in a lack of motivation to cross the border for medical care it does not tell the full story. The following section attempts to shed some light on other variables affecting transborder interaction in border homeless populations.

3.7 - Gender

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between gender and willingness to go to Ciudad Juarez. There was no significant association found between genders. Gender did not have a significant impact on associations between having family in Ciudad Juarez and visiting. Gender appears to have little effect on whether or not the respondents go to Ciudad Juarez. 82.4% of females and 79.4% of males do not seek medical treatment in Ciudad Juarez. Our overall analysis appears to depict that gender plays little role in the homeless borderlanders willingness to seek transnational resources.

It is important to note that a significant association was found within the data between gender and willingness to visit, is seen in homeless borderlanders' willingness to seek medical care in Ciudad Juarez before the current wave of violence began. The respondents were asked if they used to go to Mexico for medical care before "the violence". In this case, gender does appear to play a role in determining whether homeless borderlanders were willing to seek medical care in Ciudad Juarez. The relationships between gender and seeking medical care in Mexico before the current period of violence was significant, $X^2(4, N = 230) = 9.760, p < .001$. 17 percent of men reported seeking medical care in Ciudad Juarez before the violence, 35 percent of women reported the same. It is possible that the current wave of violence has made it less likely that homeless borderland women will seek medical care in Mexico.

Although further research must be performed to better understand this association, some research shows that homeless women are often potentially more at risk of street violence than men. Recent research by Paula Mayock, Sarah Sheridan and Sarah Parker (2012) discusses the relationship between gender-based violence and homelessness among migrant women in Ireland. They found that the experience of gender-based violence was a dominant and recurring theme in the life trajectory of the migrant homeless women they interviewed.

Homeless women often face hardships and gender-based violence prior to and while homeless. The vulnerability many homeless women face in conjunction with the history of gender-based violence in Ciudad Juarez, mixed with the high possibility of previous violence in homeless women, may shed light on why our data shows that the women interviewed were less likely to seek medical care in Ciudad Juarez as the violence increased. More research is needed to better understand this association.

Chapter 4: **Case Study - *The Transnational Strategies of an African American Man on the U.S. – Mexico Border***

As the previous chapters suggest, homelessness on the U.S – Mexico border reflects, contrasts, and merges both U.S. and Mexican forms of homelessness. The following case study exemplifies a type of *transnational homeless borderlander* as experienced by one *transnational Hotelier/Commuter* in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. In providing detail of the daily occurrences of this individual's transborder lifestyle, the study is able to capitalize on a mix method approach and capture a far more rich and intricate picture of transnational survival strategies of a type of homelessness that is unique to an environment such as the U.S. – Mexico border region.



Photo 4.1 – Mirror, Mickey, & Sunglasses

The following data was collected using a combination of methods and data: audio recordings, formal and casual interviews, capturing of moments with photographs as they occurred, as well as non-participant observation and field notes written down a few hours after the event was observed. Although the decision to mainly depict a single day in the life of Sonny⁶ is intentional, I have spent many years and countless hours enjoying wonderful conversations with him about street philosophy and survival. Many of the following descriptions parallel Sonny's days and those of many others like him I have met.

The United States-Mexico border is often viewed by politicians, social scientists, and media as a passage point for a migratory flow from south of the border to the north (Chavez 2001). Although some literature addresses the flow of United States citizens into Mexican border towns for sex tourism, fugitive status, and medical treatment (2007; Grineski, 2011), the vast amount of literature has focused on the northbound mobility. Yet, a lot happens in between, and much stays within, the border regions.

Despite the constant media coverage on the violence that has besieged Ciudad Juarez, the city remains vibrant. Life does go on for the more than 1.2 million residents of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. El Paso, Texas, faces Ciudad Juarez, from across a dry river, and steel-weaved fencing. As an El Paso native, the context of the city of my childhood has, without a doubt, changed. Yet despite the social upheaval portrayed in the media, the urban space that lies on the edge of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez continues to ebb and flow yet remains worlds apart. The following is a study of one man's transnational strategies as he navigates between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso.

As a child I would drive over the Santa Fe International Bridge, into Ciudad Juarez, with my parents in search of inexpensive groceries and goods sold at the *Futurama* grocery store and the popular *mercado* Cuauhtémoc. In the 1980's it was quite normal to see one of the local *callejero* stereotype, indigenous Tarahumara women and children begging for change. Dozens of street vendors selling

⁶ Names of people and certain places have been changed for the safety of those involved in the research.

everything from velvet pictures of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* to bubble gum (the famous *Chiclets* gum). Although many things have changed, the lack of stable and good paying jobs in Ciudad Juárez resonates and continues to feed the world of street life and the art of the street hustle.



Photo 4.2 – View into Ciudad Juárez from El Paso Street, El Paso, Texas

The street hustle, as I use it, is not reducible to anti-social maneuvering in the streets to create monetary gain. As Wacquant (1998) noted, the hustle denotes a field of activities that commonly require the mastery of a particular type of symbolic capital. Although, Wacquant's (1998) observation of symbolic capital is prevalent within the street hustle, I might add that social and cultural capital are key factors within the paradigm of a successful street hustle. In fact, the street hustle that can be observed and lived out on the streets of Ciudad Juárez and downtown El Paso is more often a trade rather than a desperate outcry from the social inequalities underlying the need to create one's own employment. What may be simplified to illegal and anti-social behavior may often times be a more complex social

interaction between daily economic needs and a lack of structural support to allow for formal economic growth. I often observe this *trade hustle* in action as I take the twenty minute walk from the San Jacinto Plaza in Downtown El Paso to the Mercado Cuauhtémoc in downtown Ciudad Juarez. This multilayered border exchange melts these two cities into what could be compared to an artist color wheel, where there are definite opposite ends of the spectrum but it is nearly impossible to differentiate and locate where one color fully becomes the other.

4.1 - Frontier Hustling

I first met Sonny during the fall of 2001 as I was tying up my dog outside of the sole coffee shop in El Paso at the time, La Dolce Vita. I had seen him before walking around El Paso's university bar district along Cincinnati Street but had written him off as just some other strange character floating around the bars. He was indeed hard to miss as there were few older black men that frequented the bar strip, not to mention his distinct heavy limp that reminded me of bad 70's movies where pimps were portrayed as flashy and over-the-top men strutting along some dingy boulevard -all of which as I would later find out was not that different from periods of Sonny's actual life.

The people who I normally pass by without acknowledging are the very people with whom Sonny shakes hands and jokingly shadow boxes. His banter is rhythmic with sounds echoing and transcending numerous worlds of American southern soul from his origins in Kansas, mixed with a Midwestern drawl creeping back up from his early years in Detroit, and all placed behind the backdrop of his mastering of border *Spanglish*⁷ that he sees as his own after living in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez for nearly 35 years. As I came to know Sonny over the past 10 years I initially thought very little about his daily routine of moving back and forth between his night time residency in Ciudad Juarez and his work area in El Paso, but in the past few years, I have come to appreciate his particular ability to bride

⁷ Spanglish is a type of blending of the Spanish and English Languages.

multiple cultures and two countries. He is truly gifted at navigating the multiple layers of the border. He is without a doubt what some border residents refer to as, a *fronterizo*- a frontiersman (see also Martinez, 1994).

When I met Sonny, I was young, unemployed, and still hopping between sleeping in my truck, at friends' houses, and with family. Hanging out on the street corners, bars and coffee shop that Sonny also frequented and having way too much time on my hands, was the perfect beginning to what became a long lasting relationship that hovered between friend and social worker. In no time I found myself spending nights leaning against the alley way that separated the coffee shop and a restaurant/bar sipping on *forties* with Sonny. At this point, Sonny was in his late forties and I was in my early twenties, yet we both seemed to share something that to this day is quite difficult to explain.



Photo 4.3 – The alley that doubled as Sonny’s office and break from the desert sun

Our relationship consistently hovered somewhere between friend and social worker. At first glance, it may have been peculiar to see a middle age black man, who may or may not have appeared to be homeless, with a twenty one year old Latino man sipping on 40 ounce Mickey’s and driving up and

down the major thoroughfare, Mesa Avenue. Looking back now, the truth of it all was we were both, in a sincere way, hustling each other at the same time as keeping each other company (Venkatesh S. A., 2002). I was intrigued by Sonny's knowledge of street life and he needed someone to drink and talk with. It may not be that far off to say that Sonny and I in some ways keep this basis of a relationship to this day.

4.2 - *Parquero*

Sonny once told me that people call him the Mayor of Washington Street. Looking back over the ten years that I've known Sonny, if there was a public figure designated to run this bar strip it may very well have been Sonny Smith that would have taken that role. Since around 1999 Sonny has been keeping the same working hours, Monday through Sunday from 1:00 pm – 8:00 pm, give or take an hour here and there. He *trade hustles* back and forth between traffic and parked cars doing his thing that he does so well.

The term *parquero* is a unique term from the border region. As is common on the Mexican/US border, culture and words often melt into new things combining to form a type of mixture, like Spanglish. In this case the word *parquero* derives from the English word park, in the sense of “parking your car”. Essentially, the border residents have borrowed the English word ‘park’, exchanged the *k* for a *q*, since there is no *k* in Spanish, and ended it with *-quero*, a common ending in Spanish to describe someone who is doing something. Sonny has hustled as a *parquero* for over ten years. He jumps back and forth in between cars simultaneously watching for incoming traffic needing a space to park and bar patrons getting ready to drive off. All of this while having never been appointed by anyone other than himself. He thus became the unofficial caretaker of this street. Sonny's ingenious organic relationship with this community reflects Mitchell Duneier's (1999) notion of a public character where a mutually beneficial social bridge was built and secured between Sonny, the business owners and patrons.

Duneier's (1999) description of a sustaining habitat for magazine vendors, where the neighborhood of Greenwich Village is home to businesses that are sympathetic, parallels Sonny's habitat of the border cultural edge. Following Marx, Duneier (1999) observed that what made a commodity or service valuable was not the utility itself but rather its utility in relationships to other social attributes, in this case the setting. In Sonny's case the setting, or habitat, are the neighborhoods in close proximity to the international border. By borrowing the Mexican practice of parking cars, while remaining within the border cultural edge that is knowledgeable and sympathetic to such a practice, Sonny was able to compliment a cultural edge with a transnational service.

4.3 - A Day in the Life of an American Border Crosser: Bridges, Crack and Hotels

Despite knowing Sonny for so many years, I had only been able to observe his life from the point of friendship on the El Paso side of the border. It was not until I began to interview and observe Sonny on an openly research oriented perspective that he invited me into his life in Ciudad Juarez. Although he had told me in passing many years ago that he smoked crack periodically, he had forgotten that he had mentioned this to me. In my initial ethnographic recorded in-depth interview with him in May 2011, I asked him if he used any drugs and his response was that he used to but now only drank malt liquor. I accepted the answer at the time assuming that he did not feel comfortable and did not recall telling me that he does smoke crack.

It took a few days of us being out on the streets together for him to open up to me more about his drug use. I have always known that Sonny has another life in Ciudad Juarez that I was not privileged to be a part of and although I wanted him to share that part of his life with me, I felt that he had to invite me into this world rather than me impose it on him. Like many people, Sonny is the type of person that limits his private life to a select few, and if I had tried to push myself into that part of his life he may have shut that door to me indefinitely, so I waited.

As with most things in dealing with Sonny, we were just hanging out in the alley behind the bar one day when he randomly turned to me and said,

“I’ll give you a story to write about. I’m going to show you the real deal ...you want to know my life in Juarez...I’ll show you what i do...for real!”

“You saying you’ll take me to Juarez man,” I said.

“No, I’m saying I won’t just take you to Juarez...I’ll take you to *my Juarez*...”

“When”, I said.

“Right now...but I need new shoes...and I need more money before I can leave because I ain’t coming back once I’m over in Juarez”, he hinted and stared at me.

“I got you man...”

“How much you got?”, he quickly bounced back at me.

“I’ve got a twenty and a ten...and I’ve got your shoes man!”

He turned to me and laughed, “Only for you baby boy...I can make three times that much if I stayed all night, but like I said for you I’ll do it”.

A few quiet minutes passed as we sat in the alley he uses as an office, smoked cigarettes, and slowly finished a forty ounce Mickey beer. It was about 4:00 p.m., peak heat hour in the summer desert landscape where it regularly hits above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. I sat on the asphalt and quietly tried to work things out in my head. I really had no idea where Sonny was about to take me and although I grew up going to Ciudad Juarez, the last few years of turmoil and violence in Juarez had made me very alert to the possibilities of trouble when crossing the border. Sonny was already a bit drunk, although not unusual for him at this time of the day, yet I still had some internal concerns about walking over the bridge with a drunken Sonny and so many *Federales* and military soldiers looking for anything or anyone suspicious crossing the bridge.

Looking back now, I can understand his hesitancy to initially hold back parts of his life. Sonny has known me for some time now and our age difference has increasingly played a role in our relationship. He has increasingly seen me as a younger nephew-like figure where our conversations often turn to lessons that he wants to bestow upon me. His street philosophy is a continuous variable within our conversations and in many ways has become the nucleus of his willingness to share deeper parts of his life with me.

As we finished up our cigarettes and sucked up the remaining malt liquor, without any preface, Sonny quietly stated,

“I smoke crack...and we need to stop and get a couple of baggies before I show you where I live...”

“OK...that’s fine,” I replied.

“You need to be cool man...I know you’re cool Baby Boy but I’m just saying...it’s important you are cool...”

“I hear you Sonny...it’s all good”.

“Alright then...let’s go.”

As we drove down Santa Fe street, which becomes the downtown international bridge, I realized that I did not have my US passport but knowing that if I told Sonny that I needed to drive home to get it before crossing he would have told me to just drop him off at the bridge and told me that we could do it some other day. I decided to take my chances upon trying to re-enter the U.S. without my passport. We began to head towards the parking lots that lie just beneath the international bridge and have historically catered to American tourist who would rather walk over the bridge than drive over.



Photo 4.4 – Downtown El Paso

As we continued driving towards the International Bridge, we stopped at a discount shoe store for those tennis shoes that I had promised. Looking at his shoes and feet as he tried on various styles I observed the pain on his face as he removed his crusty worn out Chuck Taylors that he wore without socks. His feet were significantly dirty and swollen with all of his toes seeming to be crushed together and missing various finger nails. I recalled seeing this level of unhealthy foot care from other homeless and street people who spend countless days on their feet wearing the same shoes, no socks, and unwashed. Sonny finally found a pair of shoes that he liked, a pair of white tennis shoes that cost me twelve dollars. He put them on and sprang up with better energy and clearly in less pain so we decided to continue heading to the bridge.



Photo 4.5 – El Paso Street in Segundo Barrio

Sonny began to ask me to take the right lane over the bridge, assuming that I planned on driving over, when I told him that I thought it would be best to walk over. In general I tend to avoid driving in Juarez and even more so when I am planning on being in the highly volatile areas where drug use, prostitution, and federal police congregate. To his disappointment, I parked my car and began to pay the parking fee so he got out and followed me to the pay station. At this point Sonny turned up the charm and whispered to me,

“I’m gonna show you how I know every one of these damned people” and he did deliver!

We began our march towards and over the bridge. This walk should have taken five minutes at the most to completely cross the bridge into Ciudad Juárez but seeing that Sonny was determined to show me how connected he was and to introduce me to everyone he knew, our five minute walk turned into an hour long stroll as he maneuvered from person to person. I had known that Sonny was well known as a public character in El Paso but I had not stopped to think that the fact that he commutes using the same route daily would also make him a well-known public character on both sides of the border.



Photo 4.6 – Pedestrians Crossing over the Santa Fe Bridge into El Paso, Texas, from Ciudad Juárez

4.4 - Transnational Cultural Capital and Bridging Social Capital

People who live between home and host countries often do not fit into the strict categories of either an immigrant or one that remains in their homeland (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994). Much of the current literature addressing theoretical and practical notions of transnationalism in the United States approaches these phenomena with strong empirical research (Smith, 2006; Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; FitzGerald, 2009), yet almost all transnational research does not hone in on the immediate border zones and border edges such as seen in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez.

Transnational cultural capital, as defined by Grineski (2011), is the ability to use transnational knowledge to achieve desired ends. As Grineski (2011) observed, overlapping social fields are often found among some individuals who live within the proximities of a nation-state boundaries such as the US-Mexican border. In the case of Sonny, he is able to achieve his desired goals within the particular transnational field of the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region by adding and adapting to the border culture, language, and practices that are found along the edges of the physical boundary of the US-Mexico border.

As we approached the head of the bridge where the Mexican attendants take the 50 cent border crossing fee, they immediately recognized Sonny and began to playfully joke with and laugh with him. I simply followed Sonny as he informed the attendant that I would be paying for the both of us. At this point, Sonny leaned over to me and told me that I needed to carry the bag of forty ounce beers because he was just too drunk and did not want to break them. I found myself reaching for the bag and wondering if there were laws about bringing liquor across the bridge from the El Paso side to the Ciudad Juarez side. Up until this moment, I had never thought about the laws and regulations in regards to crossing anything heading south of the border. My entire border crossing experience had been the other way around, but I nonetheless took the bag and figured I would simply give up the liquor if the custom agents questioned me.

As we continued our walk over the pedestrian side of the bridge, I noticed Sonny began to switch over to speaking more Spanish to me as he greeted just about every single *vendedor*, panhandler, street musician, and anyone sitting or standing along the pathway. As we proceeded along the bridge, Sonny progressively ceased to speak English, all the while slapping hands, hollering out to people, and continuously looking back to make sure that I was nearby. At one point he stopped introducing me to people, which made for an interesting amount of stammering around so that I did not appear to be too conspicuous. Although dozens of people stand and work on the bridge, despite the possibility that I may blend into the ethnic majority of mestizo and Mexican indigenous people, I found myself clearly being an outsider with no real reason to be standing on the bridge. I observed how nearly everyone that was standing or sitting along the bridge appeared to know one another and Sonny.

My unease and feeling of a clear distinction of me being “the other” in this bridge-crossing enclave, does well to describe the variations and often times very clear distinctions between various, classes, cultures, and Mexican generations one sees along the border. I observed how the network of bridge workers had less to do with strict ethnic boundaries and more to do with a street culture. Despite Sonny being African American and I being Mexican American, he was able to navigate this particular type of place much better than I can. He makes a living out of it. I study and sleep in El Paso.

4.5 - Prohibition and the Growing Complexities of Buying Crack

We finally passed the Mexican military troops who recently became pseudo-police with Mexican President Felipe Calderon’s mobilization of the military in the war against drugs. As we continued, a slim Mexican man who looked to be in his early thirties approached Sonny in a somewhat aggressive nature and without provocation. He told to Sonny that he could get him the *shit* he needed. Sonny stepped back and motioned with his hands to calm down, he’d be back later.

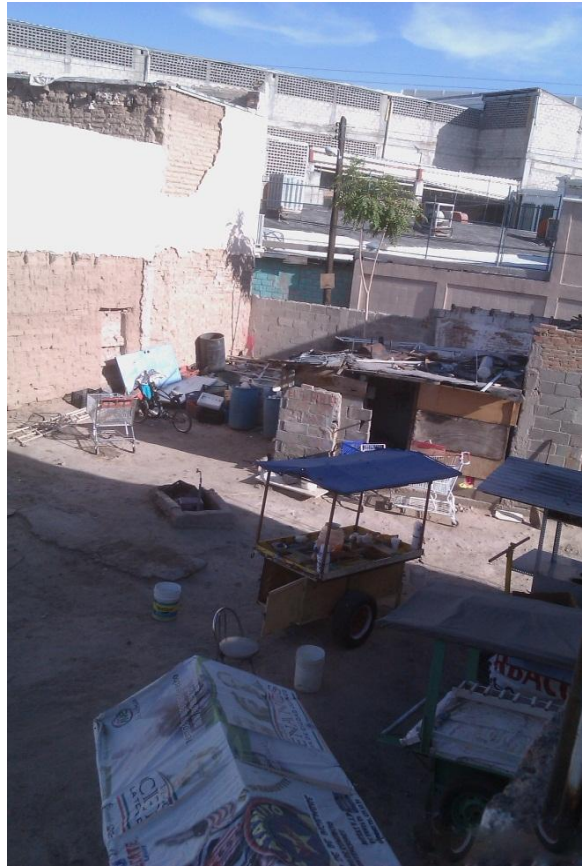


Photo 4.7 – View From Behind the Hotel

Sonny motioned over to me to come closer and whispered to me that he needed to hit up the *casa de cambio* to exchange his money for Mexican pesos before heading over to his regular drug dealer. I initially understood that the drug dealers only took Mexican pesos but I would later find out the pesos were for the hotel - the dealers, as the frontierersmen they are, accepted both US dollars and Mexican pesos. I followed Sonny as we continued to walk up Avenida Juarez, which for Americans is commonly known as the Strip. It has historically been the bar strip where young Americans easily crossed over to drink for a minuscule price in comparison to US bar prices. These days one rarely sees Americans walking around or drinking at the bars. The golden days of youthful partying have ceased to exist after the increase in violence the last few years.

Sonny dropped his U. S. dollars on the *casa de cambio* counter and quickly took his pesos back and walked out the door. As I scrambled to keep up with him, Sonny motioned to me to stay back a bit as he walked across the street and pushed between groups of idle military soldiers. I realized that Sonny was headed towards a middle aged man, flanked by a woman in her late thirties, both randomly sitting on foldup chairs placed on the side walk directly in front of the Hotel Sevilla. I crossed the street and pulled out my pack of cigarettes and began to smoke and observe. As Sonny pulled up to the dealer the women motioned over to me with a nod as Sonny looked over towards me and motioned to her as if to say that I was alright, that I was with him.

After sweating under the sun for a good ten minutes Sonny finally came over to me and grunted at me to follow him. I asked if everything was alright and Sonny simply told me that we had to wait eight minutes. It turned out that it is common practice for the drug dealers to not hold the drugs on them and to have runners bring the exact purchased amount. In this case I witnessed a younger teenage boy with blonde hair walk up to the man sitting in the chair then head around the street and disappear beyond my view. This is reminiscent of Venkatesh's work (2006; 2008) and the TV series "The Wire" (Simon, 2012) depiction of drug dealer networks where the main drug stash remains in a separate place and is only moved individually or in small units.

We kneeled in front of a *farmacia* and listened to the loud speakers whaling out Mexican Norteña music as the store clerks yelled out invitations for passerby's to come in and enjoy the shopping and good prices. The irony of sitting in front of the drug store while we waited for another type of illegal drug did not go unnoticed. These two parallel businesses with similar goals and products literally face each other from across the street, one announcing their product as the other worked hard to conceal their identities.

With impeccable timing, the female drug dealer motioned to us that she was ready so we got up and headed across the street to finalize the purchase. The actual purchase went smoothly, a quick

exchange of money and two plastic balls and we were headed up Avenida Juarez. As we calmly strolled up the sidewalk I turned back to take a view of the street as a whole and caught eyes with the female drug dealer before she looked away from us. I glanced to the left of the man sitting on the foldup chair and caught eyes with a Mexican soldier who seemed to be twenty years old at the most. My heart pumped with uncertainty as I turned back around to see Sonny drunkenly drop one of the baggies as he tried to stuff them in his underwear. Without thinking I reached down and grabbed the baggie for him and quickly gave it to him. I couldn't be certain that we were being watched by the soldiers but I did not want to take the chance; we simply needed to move on from this area so I asked Sonny if he could show me where he lived.

"I'm going to show you it all, Baby Boy, we just need to get one more bag."

"One more bag," I asked.

"Yeah...she only gave me two and I need at least three", Sonny responded.

"She didn't have more than two?"

"Nope, she only sells two at a time...we're going to have to go up the street to get more."⁸

We continue up the Avenida Juarez and turned right into what is known as the Mariscal district, which is essentially the historic "red-light" district of downtown Juarez. Although the Ciudad Juarez government recently enacted a program to "cleanup" downtown Juarez by bulldozing the old bars, brothels and strip clubs, nothing has really changed. Most of the underground business of drug dealing and prostitution has simply moved over a few blocks and continues to flourish in an alternative format but nonetheless is still alive.

As we walked up the Mariscal district we turned up a side street and stopped at a busy corner. I once again began to smoke a cigarette and leaned against the wall while watching Sonny chat with a

⁸ On April 28, 2009 the Mexican government approved modifications to the Federal Criminal Code and Federal Code of Criminal Procedure. The amendments made it so that certain levels of drug possession would no longer be criminalized, thus setting the maximum dosage of drugs a person may carry without being punished. Namely, 2 grams of opium, 50 milligrams of heroin, 5 grams of marijuana, 500 milligrams of cocaine, 0.015 milligrams to 40 milligrams of LSD.

woman who he later told me was a prostitute that he used to frequent. After finishing up his conversation with her, Sonny came up to me and explained that the women was telling him that the corner dealers had gone inside for a lunch, and refuge from the blistering 105 degree temperature. Sonny slapped me on my back and told me it was time to head to his hotel so I once again followed him up the street two blocks until we came upon a building that looked like just another rundown pueblo like building. There were no signs indicating that it was a hotel yet it was evident as we opened the screen door and approached the entrance room. The room was completely empty except for an old table and a torn up couch with stained sheets, appearing to moonlight as someone's bed. As we entered the building a woman who looked to be in her late twenties smiled and asked us if we wanted a room.

Sonny responded to her with a smile and a nod while he looked over at me, "she must be new... I've been sleeping here for the last six months and she does not recognize me!"

Sonny took out 120 pesos to pay for the night and informed the attendant that I was his friend who was visiting for the night. She smiled at me, so I smiled back wondering if she was thinking we were more than just friends. Not really knowing what else to say, I waited for Sonny and began to walk up the stairs. The attendant followed us so as to open the room that Sonny slept in. Although the hotel had a daily rate, it appeared that Sonny always stayed in the same room since his few belongings were already in the room when we entered. As the attendant opened the door for us she let us know that the room had been swept and cleaned which is why the room had the very distinct smell of *Fabuloso*, a popular Mexican household cleaner. Although the building was dilapidated and needing quite a bit of work, it had a clean smell and seemed to be well taken care of despite its appearance.



Photo 4.8 – Sonny’s Hotel Room

I walked through the room, which was a fairly good room size of approximately 450 square feet. The room was bare except for a simple white bedroom vanity on the left and on the right an old Queen-size bed with vintage 1980’s-like neon accented comforter neatly tucked into the frame. As I looked out the window I could see the corner where the absentee drug dealers should have been. As I took a panorama view of the area, I could see the mountains that cradle Ciudad Juarez and wrap around to the Rio Grande, then stop only for a short while then start up again on the sides of the border are viewed upon as two different ranges when in reality they are but one simply cut by an ancient river that became a nation-state border.



Photo 4.9 – Hotel Room and Bed

My silent personal existential moment of thought was cut short by a loud grunt from behind. As I turned to look I saw Sonny had removed his shirt and was now rifling through the inner cushion of the bed frame grunting with annoyance. I walked over to see what he was doing and asked him if he needed any help and all I got in return was grunts.

“What are you looking for,” I asked.

“Looking for my fucking pipe...I left it here earlier today, it’s gotta fucking be here!”

“Need some help...shouldn’t we close the door?”

“No man...I keep it open in case the *Federales* shows up the people downstairs will holler out to us so that we can hide our shit.”

“The Federales raid this place often?” I asked.

“Yeah...but they just come in and rough us up a bit...but if we don’t have shit on us they eventually just leave,” Sonny said with little care in his voice.

“Don’t worry about it Baby Boy, I told you that I got you...ain’t nothing gonna happen to you while you’re on my watch...got it!” he loudly slurred at me as he finally pulled out his metal crack pipe from the bed frame.



Photo 4.10 – Sonny and Author in Hotel Room

As he sat on the bed he patted the mattress and told me to make myself comfortable and pour myself a drink from the Mickey’s forty ounce resting on the vanity. We sat adjacent to each other as I watched him take out the tiny plastic wrapped baggies of crack and drop it onto the bedspread. I

watched his hands shake as he licked his middle finger and scooped up the crack cocaine and placed it on the tip of the pipe. I sat and sipped on my drink as he began to heat the tip of the pipe where the crack was. He took one big hit and held it for about 20 seconds. As he held the smoke in his lungs, I realized that despite knowing Sonny for so many years this was the first time I would be around him as he smoked crack. I realized I had no idea what type of effect it had on him. As with most drugs, crack can affect people differently, so I prepared myself mentally for any changes in his behavior that could occur. He blew the smoke out and I watched the slightly gray and white smoke exit from his mouth as his eyes remained closed for a few more seconds before opening them and looking at me.

“This really isn’t that good,” he disappointedly stated.

“Shit just isn’t how it used to be...and anyways at this point it really takes a lot more for me to feel the hit good.”

“Is there a reason why you choose to smoke out of a metal pipe?”

“I feel like it hits me better than glass.”

“Where do you get the metal pipe?” I asked.

“Car antennas, Baby Boy...snap one off and you got yourself a pipe.”

“How about the metal screen?”

“I get it from the electrical outlets.” Sonny said as he opened up the second baggie.

He finished up smoking and asked me to pass the forty as he leaned up against the wall behind the bed and lit a cigarette. He began to tell me about seeing a picture of a woman he had been having a sexual relationship with, on the cover of the PM – a weekly Ciudad Juarez newspaper. The PM newspaper is notorious for not shying away from placing very graphic photos of drug related murders. In this case, Sonny showed me the copy he saved which showed a picture of a woman turned upside down into an oil barrel with only her legs and bottom half of the torso showing. He explained how she was a prostitute that had been living in the bedroom down the hall from where we were sitting. As with

many of the murders in Ciudad Juarez, it is rarely known why someone is murdered, yet Sonny believed she may have talked or *ratted* someone out. Although clearly sad and connected to this women he quite briefly summarized and ended the conversation with,

“That’s why I’ve got nothing to say about what happens here...I know things but I say nothing!”

“That seems like a reasonable stance,” I said.

“I don’t know about reasonable but it is what it is...”, Sonny’s voice trailed off.

At this point the sun was beginning to set and Sonny began preparing for another trip to the corner to cop some more crack so we said our goodbyes and parted ways for the night. I headed back to the international bridge to try to cross back into El Paso without a passport and Sonny headed out to get that one last hit for the night.

4.6 - Discussion

Although Sonny is but one of many transnational border citizens he plays an important role within the cross-border sharing of ideas and cultures. Although he describes himself as a simple man, he is far from that. He has mastered the complexities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso in a way that exemplifies other transnational people. As I looked for meaning behind and beyond the observations that I have made while researching and documenting Sonny’s life, I went back to my recordings and listened closely to the stories Sonny shared with me. I came across a myriad of quotes and antidotes but one moment stood out as a strong representation of how Sonny views himself and how I and others have come to appreciate him. Why and how Sonny plays an important role as a *parquero* and a transnational commuter is best said in his own words:

“I’m not gonna take nothing from nobody...I’m going to A-S-K!...ask for all of mine. Each and everything I’m asking for...I’m trying to give back something. What they

are getting out of me is going to be more than the dollar that they give me...I'm going to give them something way more than just the dollars. I need the dollar right now but what they need is an education and that's how I can help them out in the long run...and I mean that. I know a lot of things but I'm not doing a lot of things. There are things that I know and I'm not doing...I know a lot of things and I hope that I can pass it on and make it better for others who are in the position and in the shape to do it...and I mean that.”

For more than thirty-three years, Sonny has built strong ties between his two countries. He lives his life within the cultural edge of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. He continues to navigate an interchange of social exchange of goods and knowledge between himself and all those that he interacts with. Sonny is an example of the frontier men and women who manage to create zones of knowledge by collecting transnational capital for the day-today practices of survival on the US-Mexico border.

4.7 - Conclusion

It is important to ask the question of how and why Sonny has been able to avoid homelessness for thirty-three years. To begin to answer this, the concepts of space, geopolitical boundaries, and citizenships must be addressed. How is the border region of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez different than other cities? Does this space give Sonny resources that he may otherwise not have in other regions?

Although it is tempting to view Sonny through the lens of homelessness because of his addiction to crack, his informal economic venture, and his nontraditional method of housing, to simplify his life to that of being “homeless” would not give justice to the notion of one’s choice of survival and way of living. It is also important to note that Sonny does not view himself as being homeless. In a world where many of us are mobile within our jobs and cities we choose to live in, I would argue that Sonny represents stability far more concrete than that of many. In the ten years that I have known Sonny he has steadfastly maintained his employment and housing. Albeit he continues to have drug addictions, he

has found a way to maintain core aspects of his life while gaining respect, building social networks and accumulating social capital that is conducive to his survival and way of life.

Sonny is an American citizen and citizenship status does give him the freedom to exit and re-enter the US-Mexico border in a distinct way that many living in Ciudad Juarez simply do not have. This legal fact along with a transnational cultural capital (Grineski 2011) has enabled him to build his transnational social capital. Through this collected transnational capital in conjunction with his proximity to the US-Mexico border, Sonny has designed a method of survival that would arguably not exist away from the border. Sonny has essentially split his life into two countries. He avoids mixing the two worlds and thus maintains stability by keeping his illegal activities involving the purchasing and use of crack to Ciudad Juarez while maintaining his informal economic lifestyle within El Paso. With this spatial division, he is able to practice a simplified form of international economic and goods exchange that creates the base of his survival strategy.



Photo 4.11 - Sonny

Conclusion

The region along the U.S. – Mexico border is complex in many ways. This study discusses how homelessness intersects migration and transnationalism insofar as how homeless borderlanders experience differing levels of transnationalism and how this can affect one's daily life on the border of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. This study takes a mixed-method approach to uncover the stories of hard-to-reach populations such as homeless people, undocumented immigrants, first generation migrants, and the agricultural workers. This study's data depicts how despite these groups having different life trajectories, they can often share the same neighborhoods, social space, and face similar challenges.

By collecting data from Hispanic homeless populations, this study contributes to the lack of literature addressing Hispanic homelessness. By gathering data from multiple migrant generations, ethnicities, types of homelessness, gender, citizenship, and language ability, this study was able to shed light on how these variables may affect levels of transnationalism among marginal groups living in the U.S. – Mexico border.

Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative forms of research, this study demonstrates the rich and multilayered lives of the transnational or non-transnational homeless borderlanders experience along the U.S.- Mexico border. Although more research is needed to thoroughly understand how transnational practices interact with the survival strategies of homeless borderlanders, this study's data shows that the variations in transborder interactions among the homeless population may have an effect on the accessibility of transnational resources on the U.S. – Mexico border.

Further research on border homelessness is needed to continue to understand how transnationalism affects the experience of homelessness along the U.S. – Mexico border region. It is not certain how prevalent transnational homelessness is along the more than 2,000 miles of border that stretches from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas (Lachica, Castañeda, & McDonald, 2013, in press). A cross-border and multi-sighted study would give local, regional, and international governments a better understanding of how transnationalism interacts with homeless populations along

the U.S. – Mexico border. As it is quite common for border studies and transnational studies to research individuals who live between two countries, the rich and complex sociological phenomena of transnational homelessness must be considered as an important part in the academic discourse of migration, homelessness, and transnationalism.

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Glossary

Borrachitos – drunks or alcoholic

Callejerismo – refers more generally to street people that encompass a larger population than simply homeless people that are visibly on street. This term can also refer to street workers (street vendors, sex workers, window washers, parqueros, car washers etc.)

Callejero – a street person

Catholic Workers Movement – the Catholic Worker movement was founded in 1933 during the Great Depression by Dorothy Day at the urging of Peter Maurin. It is best known for houses of hospitality located in run-down sections of many cities, though a number of Catholic Worker centers exist in rural areas. Food, clothing, shelter and welcome is extended by unpaid volunteers to those in need according to the ability of each household. In 1995 there were 134 Catholic Worker communities, all but three in the United States⁹.

Centro de los Trabajadores Agrícolas Fronterizos – Social service agency in El Paso, Texas, dedicated to helping agricultural workers.

Fronterizos – borderlanders - people who live on either or both sides of the U.S. – Mexico Border region

Hard to reach populations – there are a number of populations that are difficult to find for research and/or social service purposes. They are also referred to as hidden populations as they often do not want to be found due to possible persecution or stigma. Some examples are, homeless people, undocumented immigrants, intravenous drug users, and sex workers.

Homeless agricultural workers – any agricultural worker that is experiencing any type of homelessness, including but not exclusive to street sleeping, emergency shelters, temporary housing

⁹ <http://www.catholicworker.org/historytext.cfm?Number=78>

unsuitable for living (i.e. no running water, no heat in the winter, etc.), and doubling up with friends and/or family.

Homeless borderlander – any person that is permanently or temporarily living on either side of the U.S. – Mexico border area that is experiencing any type of homelessness.

Iglesia Sagrado Corazón – also known as Sacred Heart Church. It is the oldest Jesuit parishes in El Paso. The church has a long standing commitment to assisting homeless people, agricultural and migrant workers, and the neighborhood poor.

Indigentes – indigent

Internal migrant – a person who migrates within the international political boundaries of a country. In this study an internal migrant refers to anyone in the U.S. that travels between cities and states, without crossing an international boundary, with the intent to temporarily or permanently move to another location. This type of migrant moves internally not internationally

Migrant generation

1st – A foreign born person who migrates from to a host country after the age of 18

1.5 – a foreign born migrant who immigrated to the U.S. before the age of 18

2nd – The child of a 1st generation migrant

3rd – The grandchild of a 1st generation migrant

Niños callejeros – street children

Niños de la calle – children of the street

Persona sin hogar - person without a home

Pordioseros - beggars

Precariously or marginally housed – a person that has some type of roof over their heads but the structure is either not sound for human occupation. A person that is allowed to stay in another persons

house but has no legal right to stay and therefore can be asked to leave or removed at anytime. An example of this is doubling up or network sleeping.

Resources - refers to all things that assist in procuring ones needs including housing, food, medical care, employment, friendship, drugs, sex, etc. The term resources are thus not restricted to strictly the essentials of life but rather anything that is in need or want of the individual regardless of the consequence of obtaining such things as being negative or positive. For example, a resource could equally be housing, medicine, heroin, sex, or clothing.

Segundo Barrio – also known as the Second Ward. This neighborhood lies just south of the U.S. – Mexico border in south El Paso. It is a neighborhood that is predominantly Spanish speaking, Mexican, and many of the residents are first generation immigrants.

Sheltered – refers to homeless individuals sleeping in an emergency shelter, transitional living center, hotel, or friends and family

Temporary travelers – people who plan on staying in a city (i.e. El Paso) for less than a month.

Transnational healthcare – refers to a transborder type fo health care between the Mexican side of the border and the U.S. side of the border. Some borderlanders choose to utilize both sides of the border for their medical needs. For example, a person may have their general physician in El Paso but have their dentist in Ciudad Juárez

Vita

Josué G. Lachica received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in History in 2004. After working six years in nonprofit agencies (in El Paso, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Austin, Texas) in various case management and program coordinating positions. He has worked as a street outreach worker, specializing in young adult intravenous drug users and youth prostitution. Lachica has also worked in various capacities involving STD & HIV prevention.

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Lachica has collaborated on a number of manuscripts for publication including two book chapters and two journal articles:

Lachica, J. G., Castañeda, E., McDonald, Y. J. (2013, in press) “Border Poverty, Housing, and Health” *Poverty in America*. Edited by Kevin Fitzpatrick. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Forthcoming. Castañeda, E., Beck, K., Lachica, J. G. “Poverty, Ethnicity and Culture: Walking through Hispanic Neighborhoods in New York, San Diego and El Paso” *Mobility Method, Ethnography and the City*. Edited by Timothy Shortell and Evrick Brown.

Campbell, H., Lachica, J. G. (submitted). “Transnational homelessness: Finding a place on the U.S.-Mexico border”. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Mata, H., Flores, M., Castañeda, E., Medina-Jerez, W., Lachica, J., Smith C., & Olvera, H. (2013, in press). Health, hope, and human development: Building capacity in public housing communities on the U.S. – Mexico border. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, xx(x), xx-xx.

Lachica has attended a number of professional conferences including, the annual American Sociological Association (Denver, Colorado, 2012), Southwestern Social Science Association, (San Diego, California), Midwestern Sociological Association (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2012), and the National Association of Chicano/a Studies (New York, New York, 2009).