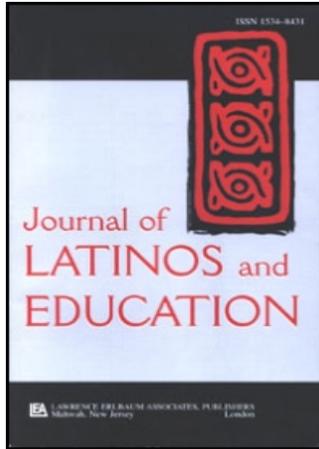


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Latinas' Practices of Emergence: Between Cultural Narratives and Globalization on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Anna Ochoa O'Leary^a; Norma E. González^b; Gloria Ciria Valdez-Gardea^c

^a Mexican American Studies and Research Center, University of Arizona,

^b Department of Language, Reading and Culture, University of Arizona,

^c Estudios Urbanos y Ambientales, Colegio de Sonora,

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Anna Ochoa O'Leary

*Mexican American Studies and Research Center
University of Arizona*

Norma E. González

*Department of Language, Reading and Culture
University of Arizona*

Gloria Ciria Valdez-Gardea

*Estudios Urbanos y Ambientales
Colegio de Sonora*

In this article, we attempt to map out the “in-between” space between global and cultural narratives that mediates women’s educational trajectories. Case studies of women living on the U.S.–Mexico border make visible these spaces, sites of “practices of emergence”: the practices that emerge from incommensurable economic demands and social prescriptions and produced in the act of social survival. In negotiating both global and cultural narratives, materially and ideologically, the occupants and ideas that inhabit these spaces are in constant flux, resulting in the reformulation of the notions of mothering, pedagogy, and place, resulting in variable educational outcomes for women.

Key words: border, narratives, Latinas, education, labor, culture

Correspondence should be addressed to Anna Ochoa O'Leary, PhD, Mexican American Studies and Research Center, César E. Chávez Building, University of Arizona, P.O. Box 210023, Tucson, AZ 85721. E-mail: olearya@u.arizona.edu

“... it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking.”

(Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 172)

The sentence of history is most evident in those who live their lives on the line. The women in this study lived, both literally and metaphorically, on the line, on the border, in the in-between spaces between nation states, globalized economies, and cultures. Their culture of survival was an emergence between “incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 172).

This study attempts to map out the space between materialist and interpretive theories (see González, 2004; Maurer, 2005) that lead to “practices of emergence” (González, 2006a) for Latinas in the borderlands. Materialist interpretations, adopting frameworks from world systems theory, neo-Marxism, and modernization theory, have focused on economic macrotheories to account for social practices in education. Interpretive and “mentalist” approaches have focused on issues of voice and hermeneutics and on constructs such as identity and agency. In this article, we attempt to map out the “in-between” space within which women forge a pathway that mediates between the global and the local in their educational trajectories. We draw from the construct of “practice” as articulated by Bourdieu (1977, 1990), de Certeau (1984), Giddens (1979), and Ortner (1984). This construct provides a lens that can mediate between determinisms and voluntarisms, and can be seen as a third way to apprehend social action, one that mediates between the objective and the subjective, between agency and structure, between individualization and globalization. Social practice is the site where structure and agency, individual and society, household and economy, mutually constitute each other. This study navigates the space between the powerful cultural narratives in the lives of women on the border and the weight of a globalized economy that concentrates economic power in fewer and fewer hands. Although globalization is publicly conceptualized as the increasing penetration of capitalist trade practices into the furthest corners of the globe, its symbolic dimensions include “changes in the economy, labor force, technologies, communication, cultural patterns, and political alliances that it is imposing on every nation” (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000, p. 3). As both a materialist and an interpretive framework, globalization is about the convergence of asymmetrical relations in “contact zones”: social spaces “where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). Voices from such spaces call attention to and make visible the often neglected but critically important “sub-spaces” (Kearney, 1995), or “places” where unequal division based on social divisions such as gender, class, race, or nationality are continually being imposed or contested (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Both occupants and ideas inhabit these spaces and are in constant contact, simultaneously

merging, coalescing, intersecting, and converging, yet bumping up against other flows and currents.

In this study, the forces of globalization contributed to an economy premised on cheap labor along the U.S.–Mexico border. As Suárez-Orozco (2001) argued, the region that at once unites and separates the United States and Mexico is one of the most globalized spots in the world today. Clearly, the women in this study were caught in a contact zone—geographically, politically, economically, and metaphorically—that dominated much of their everyday lives. Such conditions thus contribute to the subordination and undereducation of women and often reinforce each other. Yet in their own agentic use of an epistemological space that redefined “mothering” and “pedagogy,” the women in this study reconfigured notions of learning and teaching that can be offered as an “account of the mutually determining yet durably structured influences of action and system” (Maurer, 2005, p. 1). Their pedagogies were not of scripted literacy events at a mother’s knee but were embodied in the practices of constructing with their bare hands the framework within which their children learned resilience and perseverance (González, 2006b). These “Latina ways of knowing” (cf. Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006) transcend borders and are built on the voices of generations of mothers, grandmothers, and female circles of kinship. They speak to children not only in what is said, but in what is unsaid, the enduring will to survive, and the refusal to be defeated by life. Practices of emergence, then, can be seen as the mutually constitutive contact zone within which discourses and ideas flow, collide, mesh, intersect, and are reconstituted. The emergent practices of these women were dynamic and multiply situated within cultural narratives and material imperatives. Practices of emergence became a “double-voiced discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981), a discourse that mediated the heteroglossia and polyphony of competing discourses and counterdiscourses.

THE STUDY

The U.S.–Mexico borderlands, as a geopolitical contact zone, provided the context for examining household practices around employment, domestic organization, and education—practices that often encompass binational and bicultural dimensions. The negative impact of economic transformations in terms of increased dependency on global markets, and under- and unemployment, was readily observed in Nogales, Arizona, where the study was conducted from 1996 through 1998.¹ Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, together known as *ambos* (both), literally straddle the U.S.–Mexico border. Both were founded in 1882 when the railroads from Guaymas, Sonora, and Kansas City, Missouri, were joined. To many of its

¹This research was funded in part by the National Science Foundation (SBR 9616600) and by a Collaboration of Scientists grant (University of Arizona and Universidad de Sonora).

long-time residents, Ambos Nogales is one community, in spite of the fence built in 1917 that divides the Arizona Nogales from the Sonoran. It is here that the economies and cultures of the United States and Mexico relocate hybrid sites of cultural negotiation. The borderlands provide a setting, as Bhabha (1994) argued, for the negotiation of cultural difference rather than its automatic negation in the face of contradiction and opposition.

One objective of the study was to isolate the social and material factors that influenced a household's ability or willingness to invest in the education of its members, particularly its female members. For the quantitative part of the study, a survey instrument was developed and administered to 297 randomly selected households.² For the qualitative part of the study, 13 women from a convenience sample of households were interviewed. These interviews helped us understand particular household situations. Interviews with women and other household members were informed by the assumption that the decisions about how educational goals are made and met are intelligible in the context of other kinds of household decisions. The interviews with women focused particularly on the integration of employment, domestic responsibilities, and their perceptions of the role of education. In this way, the narratives helped flesh out how women negotiated their educational ambitions within broader, global conditions. From these interviews, various case studies emerged that advanced our understanding of the dilemmas women face as they balance economic pressures and cultural expectations. The qualitative aspect of the research resonated with the dislocations of fixed centers and margins, as the women transformed and occupied multiple subject positions and historical contingencies. In this way, each narrative reveals enunciatory moments of the production of multiple and contradictory beliefs, each in its own way encapsulating "a temporality that makes it possible to conceive of the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 24).

AMBOS NOGALES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

The articulation of local responses to macroeconomic processes engendered by trade agreements between states is particularly visible in border cities such as Ambos Nogales. The development of Ambos Nogales, in particular, is a history of the adjustment of local populations to broad-scale economic planning between the United States and Mexico. As early as 1965, the establishment of free trade zones³

²The questionnaire consisted of 80 questions of both fixed-choice and open-ended types. It was developed using the guidelines suggested by Bernard (1994, pp. 268–275) and Fink (1995).

³Although the free trade zones were modified over the years, they generally came to consist of a 20-mile-wide area along each side of the U.S.–Mexico line.

under the Border Industrialization Program spurred commercial trade and industrial development between the two nations (Sklair, 1993). Like many other border cities, Ambos Nogales also experienced rapid growth primarily because of its role as a transit point for goods between the United States and Mexico (Arreola & Curtis, 1993), then later for migrants in search of economic opportunities. Most notably, the Border Industrialization Program laid the groundwork for the *maquiladora* program,⁴ and by the 1970s, this framework for “free trade” between the United States and Mexico was tested (Kopinak, 1996). The *maquiladora* program included favorable economic concessions for American industries in Mexico, the use of cheap Mexican labor, and lax enforcement of Mexican labor laws. Although the *maquiladora* program was initially limited to the U.S.–Mexican foreign trade zones, in 1971 the Border Industrialization Program was officially extended to the entire Mexican Republic. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, which went into effect on January 1, 1994, deepened trade policies reserved for *maquiladora* industries under the Border Industrialization Program into non-*maquiladora* industries including agriculture, fisheries, mining, and forestry (Weintraub, 1996). Because of its history, the community of Ambos Nogales presented a unique opportunity to investigate the intersection of macrolevel forces and microlevel transformations.

A notable outcome of trade policies between the United States and Mexico has been the increased vulnerability of local communities to global market instability. The opening of national economies by international trade agreements has incited competition among corporations for international markets, resulting in a variety of strategies designed to cut operational costs and increase profits (Quintero-Ramírez, 2002). The ability to move across national boundaries in search of pools of cheap labor is one strategy. This has resulted in the loss of jobs in industrialized nations. Another strategy has been to reorganize the labor force to make it more flexible. There are several types of flexible labor arrangements, but in principle they allow a firm to regulate the level of wages it pays by adjusting the number of hours employees work or the amount of the work to better respond to production demands. Flexible labor arrangements can include part-time, temporary, short-term, seasonal, and home work. In the 1980s, employers dramatically increased the use of flexible labor to increase profits (Rosenberg, 1991). Known as *restructuring*, the move toward more flexible employment contributed to worldwide economic instability and a shift toward a greater split between unskilled and skilled labor (Castells, 2000). In response to the reduction of hours or wages, affected

⁴*Maquiladoras* were organized along a twin-plant assembly concept where companies set up plants on both sides of the border. Using this arrangement, U.S. companies send raw materials to assembly plants established in Mexico. Mexico provides cheap labor for production and/or partial assembly of products. Partially assembled products are exported back to the U.S side, where the company’s “twin plant” provides final assembly and/or packaging for shipping.

households deployed more of their members into the workforce, including women.⁵ For women in particular, flexible employment has been erroneously perceived as a matter of “choice” and promoted as something that allows women to work while carrying out reproductive obligations (Barndt, 1999). However, touting flexible employment as a matter of choice and beneficial to women largely ignores historic discrimination based on existing social divisions, such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Barndt, 1999; Tienda, Donato, & Cordero-Guzmán, 1992). It also bears emphasizing that the impact of discrimination and lack of economic autonomy is not limited to conditions in developing nations but is, in fact, a problem wherever ethnic and racial minority women are found (Tienda et al., 1992).

In many cases, *flexible employment* for women is a euphemism for lack of job security; few, if any, benefits; and low wages (Stromquist, 2002, p. 135). However, the instability that comes with the trends toward flexible employment arrangements can be improved to a large degree with investment in human capital through education or training (Becker, 1993). The idea that education and training improves earnings and job stability is widely accepted. Where employment strategies are diverse, education can help procure more standard employment arrangements characterized by full-time permanent employment and thus improve job stability (De Anda, 2000). De Anda's research has shown that women of Mexican origin—especially young, recently immigrated, and poorly educated women—have generally been concentrated in employment characterized by frequent joblessness, involuntary part-time work, and, consequently, stagnant earnings and increased poverty rates.

In spite of this generalized understanding, the route to formal education is often muddled. In impoverished households, investment in education is often perceived as selfish or wasted on secondary workers (Hackenberg, Murphy, & Selby, 1984) or too costly (Bean, Chapa, Berg, & Sowards, 1994). The expense of education and job training is thus subsumed by more critical expenditures. In the United States, the decreasing educational attainment of second- and third-generation Mexican-origin populations suggests that the increased educational aspirations of the Mexican-origin first generation have failed to provide any real economic advantage (Bean et al., 1994). Although conventional thinking holds that investments in education and training to improve skills will enhance future productivity and job stability, other factors, such as racism and gender, mediate the advantage that education is expected to provide (Tienda et al., 1992). Consequently, household decisions concerning education necessarily factor in other concerns, pragmatic or otherwise, outlining untidy realities within which decisions about investment in education are made.

⁵The proportional growth in the rate of labor force participation for women during recessionary periods can be understood in light of the household as society's primary unit of production and reproduction (Wilk & Netting, 1984).

FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT ON THE BORDER: THE CRASH OF THE RETAIL ECONOMY AND THE KRESS STORE CLOSURE

For more than a decade, Mexican *peso* devaluations have severely hurt independent retail businesses, a long-time source of employment for women. In the fall of 1996 and 2 years after NAFTA was adopted, the popular Kress retail store in downtown Nogales, Arizona, closed. The general public blamed the closure on the economic recession that had led to the devaluation of the Mexican *peso* in December of 1994.⁶ Numerous businesses on the border also failed. For the retail industry, flexible employment has been a way to lower the cost of labor because the full cost of hiring full-time employees is nearly eliminated.⁷ The following case illustrates how the failure of many retail shops (the Kress Store, Capin's, Kory's) marked Nogales's transition to a globalized economy and how for one woman, a relatively stable workforce and perspectives on education were swept up by ensuing flexible labor arrangements.

Leticia: The Practices of Emergence in Balancing Employment and Family

In 1997, Leticia, 52, was a displaced worker after the Kress Store closed. As a young woman, her family had enjoyed economic stability with the income provided by her father's appliance repair business in Nogales, Sonora. All of her older brothers studied for professional careers, and one became a physician. Leticia was 17 and in her second year of private school studying English in Nogales, Arizona, when her father's sudden death caused a change in the family's economic status. Upon her father's death, a brother took over the family appliance repair business, but it soon failed. At this time, Leticia was forced to quit the more expensive private school in exchange for the study of *comercio* (office skills), which was thought to be more marketable. She then went to work for a local accountant in Nogales, Sonora.

Leticia's mother was already 43 years old when Leticia was born. Her most pressing concern after her husband's death and her own failing health was for Leticia's future. Leticia explained that for women in those days, an occupation was

⁶Weintraub (1996) argued that Mexico's 1994 monetary crises was due to Mexico's trade deficit with the United States, a result of a rapid growth in U.S. exports to Mexico at the onset of NAFTA.

⁷In the United States, the costs of a full-time employee usually include those mandated by fair employment laws, such as payment to state unemployment insurance and workman's compensation insurance. These, as well as optional costs associated with employee benefits packages (e.g., employer-based health insurance, retirement or profit-sharing plans) can often be avoided by hiring persons on a part-time or temporary basis.

not looked upon as a means to ensure one's future, nor was education. Instead, the idea that a man was responsible for the support of his wife and family was impressed upon the women of her generation:

... en aquellos tiempos, no se pensaba en el trabajo para asegurar el futuro de una mujer; ni en la educación, solo se inculcaba que el hombre era quien podía proporcionar seguridad a la mujer.

[... in those days, work was not thought of as a way to ensure a woman's future, neither was education, it was only inculcated that a man was the one who could provide a woman her security.]

One day, Leticia off-handedly mentioned to her mother that her employer jokingly expressed that he might have to marry her because he and his girlfriend had had an argument, possibly ending the relationship. Leticia said that her mother nearly jumped out of her deathbed. Grabbing her daughter and shaking her as if to jolt her into reality, her mother cried out that this was the opportunity she had been praying for; God had answered her prayers and she could now die in peace knowing her daughter would be provided for. Social pressure was brought to bear on Leticia's employer, his comment having been taken seriously, and marriage arrangements were made in a matter of 2 weeks. Leticia said that she was the object of town gossip as rumors spread about a suspected premarital pregnancy and a "shot-gun" marriage.

Toda gente me señalaba; que yo estaba embarazada, que mi hermano le había puesto una pistola atrás a Juan para que se casara conmigo, que de qué otra manera se justificaba que él que ahora es mi esposo hubiera dejado a su novia de un día para otro, que yo antes de casarme ya era su amante, que yo me acostaba con él ... fui la comida del día ... era la desventaja de vivir en un pueblo chico, todos te conocen.

[Everyone pointed me out, that I was pregnant, that my brother had forced Juan to marry me at gunpoint, that for what other reason would he, who is my husband, leave his girlfriend from one day to the next, and that we were lovers before we married, that I slept with him ... I was the talk of the town, that is the disadvantage of living in a small town, everyone knows you.]

She said that she looked on with envy at the younger generation of women who do not hesitate to tell others to mind their own business.

Leticia's mother died about a year and a half after Leticia's marriage. Leticia sarcastically remarked that her mother must have rolled over in her grave to know the reality of the so-called security that marriage had provided her. She lamented that her more than 25 years of marriage had resulted in stagnant dreams. Without economic autonomy, her husband became the sole administrator of the household's resource, and they had yet to realize any real economic stability.

Mi mamá me aconsejaba que esperara, que pronto iba a superar los problemas, pues yo vivía esperanzada ... y luego él también me decía: 'vas a ver cuando termine de estudiar te voy a comprar lo que siempre has querido.' Pues uno se ilusiona, y se imagina que cuando ese momento llegue ya no tendremos tantos problemas económicos. Pero ya pasaron 25 años y seguimos igual.

[My mother advised me to wait, that we would soon resolve our problems, well I lived my life hopeful ... then he too would tell me: "You will see that when I finish my education, I will buy you what you have always wanted." Well, one is filled with illusions. One imagines that when that moment comes there won't be so many economic problems. But 25 years have passed and nothing has changed.]

Leticia complained that her husband did not keep her informed about household economic matters. He made all of the important decisions regarding his work, finances, and plans for the future, and he disregarded her opinion in what she described as *macho mexicano* fashion. She was unaware of any provisions being made for her financial security. They did not own a home, and, at 51, she could only guess about her economic future and worried if she were left to provide for herself. Efforts to convince him to pay for their daughter's college education after he withheld the necessary material and moral support for her to continue had failed. Leticia had also pleaded with him to buy a computer for their youngest son, with no success.

In 1976 Leticia began working outside the home in an effort to achieve a measure of economic autonomy. Part-time employment satisfied her dual need to be home to watch her children when they were still small and help her household economically. In addition to spending her wages as she wished, she enjoyed the social contact that came with employment. However, in the last years of the Kress store, Leticia was laid off, then rehired. Although she didn't know it at the time, there had been a change in the store's ownership and she lost her seniority after the lay-off. After she became unemployed, she qualified for a rehabilitation program for displaced retail workers provided by the local Job Training and Partnership Act office. More recently, she had the opportunity to apply for a job counseling street youth. She applied but was not hired. Her feelings about not getting the job were mixed. She was reluctant to have a job that would force her to leave her youngest child home alone after school. Although her son was 13, Leticia's search for employment was, for the time being, stifled, outwardly complicated by her sense of duty as a mother, first and foremost.

Quisiera buscar un empleo, pero pienso en que el horario del trabajo, no concordará con el horario de la escuela de mi hijo, el mas chico.

[I would like to look for a job, but I think that the hours of work will not agree with the schedule of classes for my son, the youngest.]

She had often considered moving to Phoenix where she has relatives and would have a better chance of finding employment. However, she again reconsidered, fearing that her youngest son would suffer from his parent's separation.

Leticia's case illustrates that 20 to 30 years ago, acquiring secretarial skills was considered a practical strategy for unmarried women who were expected to help support their households. However, education as a strategy was trumped by marriage, as husbands were expected to provide for their families, making education unnecessary. Adhering to cultural narratives that emphasized devotion to marriage and family, was, ideally, the road to economic security for women. Following the conventional thinking of the day, investment in a woman's training or education was a short-term goal: It was necessary only to the degree that it would help her acquire a job, and this too was transitional, until the day she married.

For many years, retail stores had made use of a flexible labor force, mostly women, who, like Leticia, took on intermittent work that provided some discretionary cash and a measure of autonomy while allowing them to work around hours that were convenient in terms of their motherhood duties. However, when the independent retail trade industry collapsed in Nogales, Leticia remained committed to flexible employment. Yet flexible employment thus works to undermine women's economic progress in various ways: first by creating regional instability and in this way limiting the opportunities for the economic progress that can be used to help support women to attain educational goals (O'Leary, 2006), then by capitalizing on gendered ideologies that promote women as mothers and men as single wage earners upon which wives are dependent.

The ambivalence that women might feel about working "full time" and acquiring the education that would help them access more stable jobs in their future might in fact come from the repackaging of motherhood to serve the interest of capital. Flexible labor fits well with the articulation of prescribed household reproductive tasks, where the intermittent nature of the work pattern allows women to occupy an in-between space between workplace and home-place. It is also precisely in these places—"intersections of emergent subject positions" (Smith, 1992, p. 503)—that voices of discontent and counterhegemony are often overcome by the homogenizing discourse of modernization (Wade, 1999). Leticia's narrative voice from this intersection can help us focus in on what Cunningham and Heyman (2004, p. 291) referred to as "potent interstitial moments," or the emergence of discourse that makes power visible and, through its emergence, also makes possible the hybridities that can subvert it.

"CORE-FRINGE" EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE IN THE MAQUILADORA INDUSTRY

As part of global industry's approach toward more flexible uses of labor, a noted strategy is the combined use of part-time, low-skilled, temporary workers and full-time, permanent, long-term employees within industries (Barndt, 1999; Natti, 1990; Rosenberg, 1991) as well as between industries (De Anda, 2000). Such a hy-

brid strategy of combining both “core” workers and “fringe” workers is used in retail, fast food restaurants, hospitals, and cleaning services (Natti, 1990) and agrobusiness (Barndt, 1999). Core jobs are characterized by more stability than fringe jobs (De Anda, 2000). However, as the number of full-time jobs decline, workers face increased competition for part-time fringe positions. The following case studies illustrate the effect of this employment structure in the *maquiladora* industry. Although globalization factors have led to a post-Fordist economy, for many women on the border working in the *maquilas* “the Fordist model of fragmented tasks and assembly line production continues to be the norm” (Stromquist, 2002, p. 139). In Sassen’s (2001) conceptualization of the “Global City” (p. 289), it was suggested that the adoption of flexible work arrangements appears to be a trend in more developed economies, and although this trend is associated with a higher quality of life in those economies, the casual jobs primarily filled by women hardly improve the quality of life for them. There is the illusion that “new jobs” are being created in global cities such as New York, Tokyo, and London, when in reality, casual, part-time, and temporary jobs are being created by eliminating full-time jobs. Though not in a global city, Nogales women are nevertheless impacted by similar conditions. The following cases illustrate how practices of emergence are hybridized, transformed, and appropriated within the border context. For Guillermina, full-time permanent employment in one of the *maquiladoras* in Nogales, Arizona, offered security and household stability. In contrast, the same *maquiladora* offered only precarious employment for Senovia. Although each responded with divergent practices of emergence, economic uncertainty underlies the illusion of employment opportunities and permeates their experiences and educational narratives.

Guillermina: A *Maquiladora* Core Employee

Guillermina’s household enjoyed a good measure of economic stability. She commented that she lived comfortably and peacefully in her eastside neighborhood, Monte Carlo, which was one of the more established modern neighborhoods of Nogales, Arizona. Its gently curved streets and manicured yards contrasted with the older Nogales neighborhoods, where streets follow abrupt contortions of steep inclines and gullies. Expansion of the Monte Carlo subdivision had continued eastward in recent years, displaying a trend toward larger, more spacious homes.

Guillermina’s large three-bedroom home would be paid off in a few more years. The family also had two cars (which were financed through banks) and a pickup truck. The home was elegantly furnished, complete with a family room that proudly displayed the various awards earned by her children. Guillermina and her husband had come from the border mining town of Cananea, Sonora, 15 years earlier. Her husband completed the *preparatoria* (the equivalent of a high school de-

gree) there, but she had only finished the *secundaria*⁸ (middle-school grades to the ninth grade). Guillermina said that her husband had never had difficulty in finding steady employment, which she attributed to his good education. He had been working full time for the past 6 years in a customs agency. Before Guillermina was employed by the *maquiladora*, she sold tamales to make ends meet. She didn't believe, as much of the community did, that there was an employment problem in Nogales, Arizona. She believed instead that those who were unemployed were unemployed by choice ("*Está desempleado el que quiere*") and that there were many opportunities for economic improvement. She also added that she was aware of the various governmental institutions that had job-training programs but believed it was one's own responsibility for finding where the employment opportunities were.

Guillermina's resolute style complemented her duties at a *maquiladora* on the U.S. side of the border, where she worked full time. The *maquiladora* provided the final assembly for a variety of electrical items and packaged them for shipment. Of the 16 to 20 workers employed at any time throughout the year, only 4 had full-time permanent (core) positions. She spoke highly of the manager of the *maquiladora* and appeared to enjoy her role as leader and mentor to the other workers. As a full-time permanent employee, she enjoyed certain employee benefits: a pension plan, insurance, and payroll savings. Her position as team leader made her an advocate for the other workers. She helped train new hires and helped them adjust. Problems were usually smoothed over by talking with the employees and trying to make them feel as if they were part of the team. To this end, she helped promote social relationships between workers by helping organize social festivities, such as birthday parties or anniversaries.

Two of Guillermina's three children had already completed high school. Her son had started at the local college but opted to marry before he finished. Although disappointed, Guillermina and her husband could do little to persuade him otherwise. Guillermina's daughter, Lilia, also started attending the local college but after a few months changed to a two-year medical assistant program in Tucson, Arizona. The change in plan was largely due to Guillermina's influence. Guillermina explained that her daughter initially wanted to study to be a teacher, which would require a university degree and several years of study. She was concerned that her daughter's choice of career would take too long to complete. Guillermina and her husband then suggested that she choose a shorter technical school program. Together they decided on a career as a medical assistant, and for this Lila would commute back and forth to a college in Tucson 50 miles away. As a bonus, the school also promised to help her find employment when she graduated. After Lilia finished her program, she then found employment in a medical office in the area. The

⁸The *secundaria* refers to Grades 7 through 9 in the Mexican educational system.

firm also provided continuing medical education for its employees on the condition that employees benefiting from the courses commit to the firm for a contracted period of time.

This case illustrates the power that incertitude can exact on decisions regarding investment in education, regardless of the advantage of household stability. Material indicators (home ownership, installment loans, full-time employment) suggest that Guillermina's household was economically stable. Yet there was still a tentative approach to investing in the education of her daughter. Guillermina's cultural narratives (see Flores, Byars, & Torres, 2002, for a similar narrative), informed by the broader unstable economic environment and the disappointment of her son leaving college to get married, persuaded Lilia to exchange her more ambitious career goal to become a teacher for the lesser and more reliable option.

Senovia: A *Maquiladora* Fringe Employee

In contrast to Guillermina's story, the story of Senovia can be used to illustrate how education can be totally subordinated by the ambiguities wrought by market instability, and, in a vicious cycle, how the lack of educational preparation predisposes women to managerial manipulation. Senovia was a single mother who had lived in Nogales, Arizona, for 10 years. For the past 3 years, she had worked at the assembly plant with Guillermina. Unlike Guillermina, however, Senovia's fringe employment at the *maquiladora* had little security to offer. She had two grown children and an elementary school age younger son who lived with her. Her very small apartment in Nogales, Arizona, was located in the central, older part of town. Situated against one of Nogales's many hillsides, her apartment was on one of streets that ran alongside the U.S.–Mexican border. The street was well known among local residents for its steady stream of border crossers during all hours of the day and night, and the equally steady stream of border patrol agents in hot pursuit. The home was not easily accessed. A narrow gutter-like pathway wound up from a parking lot at the bottom of the hill to a complex of older housing units built in the traditional Mexican style with doorways that open onto the paths of pedestrians. One could only imagine how hazardous the steep path would be when it was iced over during one of Nogales's frosty mornings or for one encumbered by an armload of groceries. During the weekdays, Senovia shared the apartment with her sister, who came from across the border to work as a bus driver for the local school district. Their modest dwelling had always been lived in by her family, she explained; first by her parents, then herself and her children.

Senovia's parents went to the first few grades of primary school. Her father, who was a U.S. citizen, worked at various occupations. As a child, her household faced difficult economic times, and, like Leticia, Senovia was unable to finish her schooling because she had to work and help the family. In contrast, the sister who lived with her studied *comercio*, and Senovia's other sister, who lived in nearby

Rio Rico, completed a post-*secundaria* course of study, *secretareado bilingüe* (bilingual secretarial skills). Overall, her eight brothers and sisters had many negative education experiences. She said that teachers would hit them for little reason, which is why most eventually quit before completing the *secundaria*, which has since become mandatory:

... no todos terminamos la secundaria ... ni la primaria ... muchas veces porque no les gustó o porque les pegaba la maestra—por cualquier cosa ya no querían ir a la escuela. Entonces ya no fueron y así se quedaron y ahora ya es requisito que termines la secundaria y si tienes la preparatoria pues mejor ... En aquellos tiempos no te pedían de requisito que hubieras estudiado la secundaria, con que estudiaras la primaria bastaba.

[... we did not all finish middle school ... or primary school ... many times because we did not like it when the teacher beat us—for any reason, they didn't want to go to school. So they stopped going and that is how they were left behind and now it is a requirement that you finish middle school and if you have high school, well so much the better ... In those days, no one made you complete middle school, having attended primary grades was enough.]

When asked if she would consider the possibility of preparing herself for the job market with additional training or education, she replied that she felt depressed and was distracted by her son's drug abuse problems. She had previously attended English classes, but her present concerns overwhelmed her too much to continue:

Yo tengo muchos problemas con mi hijo y no tengo cabeza para pensar en algo más, como que no tengo ánimo, como que no puedo concentrarme principalmente en el inglés que ya lo he estudiado....

[I have many problems with my son and I don't have the head to think about anything else, as if I don't have the will, as if I cannot concentrate on the English, which is what I have already studied.]

Senovia worked full time at the *maquiladora* but was considered a temporary employee and was therefore not eligible for the employee benefits that went with full-time employment. She saw very little possibility for improving her economic position at the *maquiladora* because continued employment was not guaranteed. Fueling this insecurity were questions about the company's organizational structure. Senovia explained that her coworkers at the *maquiladora* had compared their paychecks and wondered why their checks came from different companies. So even though Senovia had been working at the *maquiladora* for 3 years as a temporary employee, she did not foresee any change in her employment status. Undeniably, her prospects for an improved status in her current employment appeared limited. She had only completed the fifth grade of school. She was not a U.S. citizen,

did not have a work visa, and was not eligible for any of the various job-training programs that might have been available to others.

In spite of the poor prognosis for better employment, Senovia's work history showed that she was a loyal and dedicated employee at several jobs. The employee recognition certificates on her wall testified to her hard work. She had worked for many years in Kory's, a Nogales women's garment retail shop, minutes away from where she lived. Like so many other retail businesses, Kory's now stood closed and abandoned. Pressures to support a family on her own were compounded by a debt incurred by the hospitalization and rehabilitation costs for a son who contracted meningitis soon after birth and suffered severe developmental conditions before his death as a teen, 12 years ago. She had been paying this debt for 15 years. Before going to work at the *maquiladora*, she worked as a clerk or at stocking shelves, at times finding in her work a relief from the problems and emotional strains of raising a severely handicapped child.

Cuando estamos en el trabajo debemos olvidarnos un poco de ellos [los problemas], tratar de dejarlos fuera....

[When we are at work, we need to forget some of the problems, try to leave them outside ...]

However, repeated economic downturns that resulted in lay-offs and reductions in the hours worked per week made it harder for her to support her household. When her hours were reduced, she looked for other employment. She had often worked night jobs to be with her children during the day. The search for steady, reliable employment led her to the job at the *maquiladora*.

In part, it is due to an all-important sense of duty to family that Senovia decided to leave the *maquiladora* job and go live with her daughter in Mesa, Arizona. This decision is best understood in the context of the social prescriptions that outline women's devotion to household and family. She expressed anger and guilt for having worked while her children were little. She reflected critically on herself in suggesting that in having to care for her older handicapped son, she might have neglected her second son, now 19, who had been in continual trouble with the law and with drug addiction.

... él [mi hijo] tiene ese problema: que consume drogas ... desde chiquito he batallado mucho con él, ser porque siempre yo he tenido que trabajar.

[... he (my son) has that problem: that he takes drugs ... since he was little I have had had a lot of trouble with him, perhaps because I have always had to work.]

Senovia was convinced of her importance to his recovery and was willing to endure economic hardships as long as her son was given a chance to rehabilitate himself. A powerful cultural discourse of mothering led her to expect no one to care for

her children. Her sense of responsibility was demonstrated by weighing her maternal role against the additional insecurity that the move might trigger. Her prospects for a job in Mesa were unknown, but she strongly felt that for those who were willing, there would always be work: "*Hay mucho trabajo y él que quiere trabajar trabaja, él que es flojo no trabaja porque trabajo hay*" [There are many jobs available and whoever wants to, works, those who are lazy don't work, because the jobs are there].

Before leaving for Mesa, a going-away party for Senovia was organized by Guillermina and her coworkers from the *maquiladora*. Symbolically, if only for a moment, the two women shared a common space within a larger web of interconnectedness. Since she was a child, economic instability had undermined Senovia's formal educational preparation for employment, and now the weak prospect for future education and training was even more dim. She stated that she had always emphasized the importance of education to her children and still had hopes that her daughter in Mesa would better herself through education. When asked about having similar hopes for her son or herself, she smiled and shook her head.

Senovia had much in common with Leticia. Both suffered unemployment with the crash of the retail store industry. Both were forced to enter the workforce as young women to help their families, interrupting their own formal educational journeys. Yet their redefinition of pedagogies of the home offers a space for global forces to be reconfigured and countered within and against cultural narratives, crafting practices of emergence that provide a pathway that can mediate competing demands and competing discourses. With the increased incorporation of women into the labor force, divergent experiences will increasingly converge in common spaces and bring to light new contradictions. The challenge is then to focus on the intersections in which to explore the practices through which social divisions are negotiated: spaces shared by both women and men, citizens and immigrants, and core employees and the peripherally employed.

MARIBEL: BREAKING UP WITH FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT

In the previous cases, the concept of space was used to help readers understand how social divisions, such as gender and nationality, produce and enforce differences and inequality. The following case illustrates how efforts to enforce such divisions can be contested. Maribel was a 38-year-old single woman who lived with her parents in their Nogales, Arizona, home. Her parents had been married 44 years. Her father, as a young man, worked in one of the first *maquiladoras* in Nogales. Later he worked without authorization in Nogales, Arizona, as a self-taught refrigeration repairman. He had learned to be a repairman through a correspondence course he purchased as a young man. He worked at this trade for the

next 40 years and successfully provided for his wife and four children: Natalia, Beto, Rosalva, and Maribel.

Maribel's mother, Mrs. Cervantez, received a degree in accounting when she was young, although she never worked outside the home as an accountant. Upon reflection, she said she had not really been expected to work outside the home but instead had been expected to tend to her brothers until the day of her marriage. Mrs. Cervantez said her upbringing was typical for women in those days, and, to a large degree, she blamed those attitudes that forced women to remain close to home for her difficulty in adjusting to her own daughters' independence when they finished high school. All four of her children did well in school. However, when Natalia, the eldest of her children, graduated from high school and expressed her desire to go on to the university in Tucson, Mrs. Cervantez said that she became "sick" with worry: "... *me enfermé de la preocupación...¿pero como ..., como la podría dejar ir?*" [... I became sick with worry, but ..., how was I to let her go?]. She openly opposed Natalia's intent to leave home. She laughed at herself now, somewhat embarrassed, adding that she even went to consult a psychiatrist about her distress and immersed herself in prayer for strength in overcoming her fears. Her primary concern stemmed from a fear of not knowing what would happen to Natalia in light of all that she learned from the news. Mrs. Cervantez was especially worried over reports about young girls being sexually assaulted or killed. With an element of mixed pride, she said that Natalia finally convinced her to give her permission by using the advice that Mrs. Cervantez herself had doled out to her children about the need to be independent and about the importance of being prepared for life. Maribel credited Natalia for having virtually cleared this first obstacle in the path to higher education, a path that she and her other sister would follow several years later.

Of course, there were some initial concessions. Because her parents were apprehensive, Natalia would live with a trusted uncle who could assume a supervisory role in Tucson. Natalia later moved from her uncle's home into an apartment with a friend. She applied for and received financial aid, and later she also worked at a bank and was able to afford a small car. She was successful in earning a degree in education. Years later, when the research was conducted, she did not work outside the home, preferring to stay at home with her four children, who were in their teens. Her brother Beto had graduated from the University of Arizona. However, Mrs. Cervantez admitted that when her son Beto decided he wanted to go to the university in Tucson, she did not react as she had with Natalia. Rosalva, the third of the four Cervantez children, attended the university but left before graduating to get married.

Maribel, the youngest of the four children, provided the most interesting story of the Cervantez children. Maribel earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in fashion merchandising. Her interests in fashion merchandising developed during her high school years when she worked in Capin's, another down-

town retail shop that failed in the 1990s. She decided on a career based on this experience. She earned a scholarship with which she attended the University of Arizona. After graduating from the university, she worked in a major department store. Her interests continued to expand, however, and she continued to take classes at the local college to fill in the gaps in her knowledge about computers and tax preparation.

In 1997 Maribel announced that she intended to buy a restaurant. She asked her parents to help her put up the money needed to buy, refurbish, and open the restaurant. Her parents held their breath as their nice home was put up as collateral—but Maribel never wavered. The last time we saw Maribel she was proudly greeting and seating diners in her newly opened Italian restaurant on a busy corner in Tucson. Customers were being asked if they wouldn't mind eating in the restaurant outside dining area, as the house was full. Inside, Maribel's two sisters, Natalia and Rosalva, were busy attending to customers. Her nephews were busy busing tables. The hot, steamy kitchen brought forth succulent aromas, and Mr. Cervantez, sleeves rolled up, washed dishes. Mrs. Cervantez, who sat at the cash register, completed the picture of family unity. The perspiration Mrs. Cervantez wiped from her brow might well have been from the hot kitchen; or it might have been associated with nervousness. Hands clasped in prayer, she sighed, "*¡Parece que ya la hicimos!*" [It looks like we might have made it!].

This last case is an example of how a household made economically stable through education may be better able to resist industry's needs for flexible labor and avoid the pitfalls of economic instability. The results are progressive educational attainment from parents to children. For Maribel, the windows of economic opportunity opened from an early age. Perhaps not as obvious as the opportunity to work outside the household during her high school years was the educational background of her father and mother. Yet the cultural narratives that might have kept her from a higher education were negotiated within practices of emergence, as the family networks were marshaled to support her efforts. New and innovative practices emerged through a hybridity and comingling of resources and opportunities, perhaps made most obvious by interfamilial discourses that ultimately mediated within and between competing discourses and counterdiscourses.

CONCLUSION

These case studies of women engaged in the retail and *maquiladora* labor markets illustrate how practices of emergence have mediated spaces by economic constraints, opportunities, and cultural discourses. Studies in the education of Latinos have increasingly focused on interpretive frameworks that do not often take into account macroeconomic forces that impact educational decisions. This study has attempted to analyze the convergence of the macro at the level of the household.

With the introduction of free trade and regional economic instability, labor markets were restructured, resulting in the adoption of flexible employment patterns that made it increasingly difficult for primary wage earners to support a household. Because flexible employment depends on an available pool of unemployed and underemployed communities, opportunities opened for those who could remain flexible, primarily women who could negotiate precarious employment with reproductive roles. Indeed, the success of flexible employment seems to depend on the space created by the intersection of these two roles. Flexible employment has been successfully promoted as a way for women to help their households economically while carrying out domestic duties. With chronic economic instability, the connection between flexible employment and reproduction became economically entrenched and socially accommodated.

This study foregrounds the complex, multiply layered, mutually constituted, emergent interactions among people, communities, economies, networks, and environments in and across time that are part of a multiplex reading of structure and agency. It illustrates how the complex ecologies of borderland communities entails learning to coordinate and negotiate practices of emergence as households negotiate discourses about specific ways of conceptualizing, representing, evaluating, and engaging with the world. In the flux and flow of everyday life, Latino households are continuously engaged with diverse voices, points of view, conceptualizations, and evaluations that reflect the multiple discourses in which people routinely participate.

Suárez-Orozco (2001), in mapping out the research agenda for globalization and education, cited three areas that require a robust new research agenda: globalization and work, globalization and identities, and globalization and belonging (p. 357). This study has attempted to bring together research in these three areas that can impact educational practices. Pedagogically, we as educators can *create* contact zones where practices of emergence can develop, and we can invite students into a world with a concrete motivating activity within which students' engagement with both the activity and the social context are foregrounded (González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001). More important, we can move away from static representations of culture, structure, and agency and begin to view the dynamic, interactive, and mutually constitutive role of practices of emergence.

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