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Schooling and the Everyday Ruptures Transnational Children Encounter in the United States and Mexico

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Everyday Ruptures

Children, Youth, and Migration
in Global Perspective



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Chapter 7

Schooling and the Everyday Ruptures Transnational Children Encounter in the United States and Mexico

Edmund T. Hamann and Víctor Zúñiga

The system isn't working when 12 million people live in hiding, and hundreds of thousands cross our borders illegally each year; when companies hire undocumented immigrants instead of legal citizens to avoid paying overtime or to avoid a union; when communities are terrorized by ICE immigration raids—when nursing mothers are torn from their babies, when children come home from school to find their parents missing, when people are detained without access to legal counsel.

—Barack Obama, July 13, 2008

The core consideration of this volume is the everyday ruptures that characterize the experiences of transnational children and youth. As the term “everyday” implies, the focus is on the quotidian, the unremarkable, the ordinary or common, in pointed contrast with the term “rupture,” which implies violent separation, shock, and break. Per this understanding, the dynamics of ICE raids that separate parents and children, mentioned by then-candidate Obama in the epigraph, qualify as ruptures, but not as everyday ruptures.¹ Important as the obvious traumas of a raid would be for schoolchildren not knowing to whom they will come home, the part of candidate Obama's quote that most interests us here is his location of children involved in migration—that is, at school. It is our contention that the regular practice of schools can be a source of routine rupture for transnationally mobile children and thus that schools need to be ac-

counted for in a thorough depiction of the everyday ruptures encountered by transnationally mobile children.

As is noted in this volume's introduction, definitions of childhood—who is a child, what it means to be a child, and how children should be treated—vary historically and across cultures (Orellana 2009). Yet this diversity of perspectives gets dramatically reduced or ignored in an important way through the processes of schooling. In the United States, both the terms “third grader” and “third-grade reading” level have descriptive coherence, in the first instance describing an eight- or nine-year-old in the fourth year of school and in the second providing a rationale, as well as a norm, for what a reading curriculum should look like for most third graders. In other words, eight-year-olds may vary a lot, but at school much of that variation is ignored while norms about expected competencies are reified.

In Mexico, school is also a vehicle for defining age-related norms, as well as for marking deviancy when children do not meet those norms. In our study of students in Mexico with previous school experience in the United States, a study that informs much of this chapter, we found that such students were three times more likely to have repeated a year of school than those whose experience had been entirely in Mexico (30 percent to 9 percent). In other words, when children came to school with different experiences than were expected, it was often determined that such deviation meant a deficit and students were assigned as if they were behind.

Practically every country in the world mandates that children attend school and then spells out much of what should happen to students once they are at school. Children are thereby subject to state definitions that, as Margaret Mead (1961, 89) once reminded us about the United States, may well be arbitrary, but are no less consequential for that fact:

Our thought is hidebound by a thousand outworn conventions; real school begins only at five or six. Before that, even if the children are in groups, it isn't real; it's nursery school or kindergarten. . . . What possible grounds are there for believing that education should begin at six or four or three, while before that something different, called child rearing or socialization, takes place? Why is it of value to society to gather children together under outside tutelage that will supplement the home when they are five but not earlier?

Mead went on to recommend that U.S. society should consider why its schools are arranged the way they are, why children in those schools are viewed the way they are, and whether these arrangements are optimal. She did not claim they were necessarily faulty, only that their ways merited explicit consideration rather than unquestioning acquiescence.

In that spirit, given the focus on everyday ruptures, it is worthwhile to consider how a typical, unremarkable quotidian activity—the act of attending school—can become the means for subjecting children who have moved transnationally to quotidian moments of shock, disconnection, and reiterated dislocation. Considering the fates and trajectories of transnational newcomers, Carola Suárez-Orozco (2004) refers to an “ethos of reception,” in which schools are centrally implicated. It is our contention that, as part of the larger ethos of reception negotiated by transnational students, schools can create everyday ruptures. Schools do so by acting in unfamiliar ways or in ways that ignore or reject the biography and sense of identity that some students bring to school.

As feminist poet and theorist Adrienne Rich (cited in Rosaldo 1989, ix) once memorably wrote: “When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.” This chapter argues that there are many transnational children—children with experience in two or more school systems—who do not see large portions of their biographies and identities reflected in the everyday practice of school. This is because everyday school practice is associated with the construction of national identity (e.g., Benei 2008; Booth 1941; Levinson 2005; Luykx 1999; Rippberger and Staudt 2003). However, some students do not share the identity being promoted. Some others do embrace it, but only as a portion of their hybrid selves. Those in a third group seek to embrace the national identity espoused by their new country’s schools but find that the system denies their bid to assume that identity (Becker 1990), perhaps because their relative incompetence with the behaviors and epistemologies—that is, the “cultural models” (Quinn and Holland 1987)—associated with that identity undercut their efforts to be included.

Schooling’s incomplete responsiveness to biography is consequential in at least two ways. First, per a constructivist understanding of learning (Vygotsky 1978), learners make sense of new information by referencing what they already know. Thus a curriculum that is responsive to student biography and a teacher who knows how to help students ref-

erence their background knowledge related to a given topic can facilitate or expedite a student's constructivist learning. Put a different way, as Valenzuela (1999) has noted, schooling that does not value the heritage and knowledge students bring with them to school is intrinsically "subtractive," with the real consequence of heightened school failure. Second, as Erickson has noted (1987), learning in the zone of proximal development—that is, learning that a student can do with the help of a teacher, but that is beyond their independent capacity—requires trust. Per this understanding, students will push themselves harder if (a) they do not want to disappoint a teacher (which requires caring about that teacher) and (b) they know they do not risk embarrassment or criticism for wrong or incomplete answers. One way for teachers to build trust is to show an interest in learning about a student's background and a willingness to have that background be respected in the classroom.

The remainder of this chapter uses two datasets to illuminate how schools can be sites of everyday rupture for transnationally mobile children. One dataset comes from a study of students in Mexico who have attended schools in the United States. The second study references older work among Mexican newcomers in a demographically fast-changing small city in the U.S. South. Both authors participated in both studies. The conclusion includes a meditation on the roles of schools in cultural challenge and erasure, as well as in creating national identity and membership.

We start with a case study of a student and her teacher whom we encountered in Mexico. They were interviewed separately. We also include an account from another Mexican teacher (not at the case study school) that offers a complementary illustration of how limitations in teachers' knowledge of transnational students positions teachers to be agents of rupture (wittingly or not). Our goal in this segment is to provide a vivid illustration of everyday ruptures at the scale of a particular individual in a particular place at a particular time.

Everyday Ruptures at the Level of a Single Student and Teacher

The case of Gaby, a Mexico-born student who had lived most of her life in Chicago before returning to Mexico, illustrates the disconnect, reinforced by everyday ruptures, that transnationally mobile students can feel. Later in this essay we further situate Gaby, describing the study through which we met her and considering quantitative data regarding

the sense of national identity that complicates transnationally mobile students' experiences with Mexican schools. For now, however, the point to concentrate on is Gaby's invisibility—the portion of Gaby's identity that is unknown or deemed irrelevant in her encounters with Mexican secondary school.²

Gaby was in her final year of *secundaria* (ninth grade) when we met her. She had been born in Monterrey and brought to Chicago when she was four years old. She went to Chicago schools from kindergarten through grade eight but had recently returned with her parents and one sibling to Nuevo León. Older siblings remained in Chicago working. She was fourteen when we interviewed her and unusually clear in articulating her thoughts and feelings. She considered English to be her first language, although she spoke Spanish comfortably (as illustrated through our interview of her in Spanish). She did, however, sometimes pause when speaking Spanish as a term in English occurred to her and she had to think about ways to convey the same idea in Spanish.

Gaby described her experience in Chicago schools as rich and said she wanted to return there because the schools “are wonderful, and everybody is good and helps you a lot.” (“*[Las escuelas] están muy padres y todos son muy buenos contigo y te ayudan mucho.*”) She especially valued the professionalism and the kindness of her teachers. She could recall only one bad teacher, who punished those who spoke Spanish, but the majority of her U.S. teachers she liked and appreciated. She remembered a Filipina teacher who spoke Spanish and an Anglo teacher who wanted to learn Spanish and who asked her Spanish-speaking students to help her. She described in detail Illinois's standardized exams, their frequency, and their importance for advancing. She also described other rites and rhythms of schooling in Chicago, relating clearly how teachers asked questions and what kinds of answers they expected, how they prepared students for exams, how many minutes one usually had to respond to a question, and even when it was time for a snack.

In contrast—and not questioning how well U.S. schools had prepared her for her current Mexican context—Gaby depicted a bleak image of teachers and schooling in Mexico. She said Mexican teachers scolded and punished students, offering little support. According to Gaby, the only thing Mexican teachers did well was yell at students. She said the teachers seemed desperate when students did not quiet down and do their schoolwork. Gaby said she felt isolated in Mexico and wanted to return to Chicago. She had not made friends during her five months back in Mexico. All her friends were still in Chicago, and she stayed in contact

with them through the Internet and occasionally through a telephone call. Yet Gaby conceded that her younger brother (who was born in Chicago and thus legally a U.S. citizen) was having a more favorable experience in Mexico and had no interest in leaving.

It seems fair to say that Gaby was not integrated well into her new school. Locating some of the explanation for this circumstance with her or seeing it as epiphenomenal and something that might change with time does not make it any less true. An interview with one of Gaby's teachers, la maestra P., a *secundaria* teacher who taught Gaby's math and chemistry classes, suggested that at least some of Gaby's discomfort came from what she encountered at school in Mexico. La maestra told us that Gaby spoke Spanish well and that her mastery of that language was high, so she guessed that Gaby had been in a school in the *sur* (south) of the United States (presumably Texas, which has many links to Nuevo León). In other words, la maestra did not know that Gaby's U.S. experience had been in Chicago. Although la maestra did not speak English, she alleged that Gaby's level of English was poor. La maestra had never visited a U.S. school, but she was sure that the pace of math learning there was slow and argued that was why Gaby was having trouble with Mexican math. She also said Gaby was struggling even more with history: "Regarding [Mexican] history, she knows nothing. I talked to her history teacher and he said what [Gaby] needs. . . . History is hard. Now the teacher we have is very strict; he demands a lot." (*De historia no sabía nada, ya hablé con el maestro de historia y le dije lo que necesita. . . . En historia se las ve duras y luego el maestro que tenemos aquí de historia es muy estricto, él le exige mucho.*) This comment also reveals that Gaby was a student whose teachers talked about her, with one teacher reinforcing the negative judgments of another.

La maestra P. did not think there should be a special program for transnational students. Instead she suggested that they should be treated just like any other student—any differences in experiences and perhaps cosmology could be ignored. She also did not think it was necessary to talk with Gaby's parents. In fact, she did not even think it was necessary to talk individually with Gaby, except as she would individualize a comment, like "Please sit down," with any student on rare occasions. La maestra claimed the only important thing was that transnational students integrate with their classmates. For them to succeed, one needed to leave them alone, having them integrate little by little. "We can't shelter them . . . this [integration] is better for them." (*Porque no los podemos sobreproteger . . . y eso, incluso, es más benéfico para ellos.*) For la maestra,

Gaby's background was incidental. Gaby was just like any other student, although the talk about her with other teachers suggested that *la maestra* did not actually act as if this were so. Her teacher's proof that Gaby was not different from the others was that she spoke Spanish like the other students, at least in the teacher's informal estimation; Gaby had not been given a Spanish-language proficiency test. *La maestra* could not envision the school and community realities that Gaby had described to us, but she saw no flaws in her limited perspective.

Gaby's case illustrates how the invisibility of the phenomenon of student transnationalism in Mexican schools can become a source of misunderstandings, subtle forms of rejection, and feeling unwelcome. The dogma of a homogenous national identity in Mexico (Zúñiga 1998) has a clear manifestation in school practices and relations. Gaby's teachers do not know how many years Gaby attended school in Chicago. They do not know much about what she has studied, or how well she did. If *la maestra P.* is typical, then Gaby's Mexican teachers appear to know practically nothing about her personal or educational history, but they do not find this lack problematic. From her teachers' perspective, Gaby is Mexican; she has no alternative. To be sure, part of Gaby's identity is Mexican. But Gaby is not only Mexican, and treating her as if that is all she is leaves out much that she knows and much that would engage her. School is a site where the richness of Gaby's transnational biography is ignored. School is a site of rupture for Gaby; it tells her that only part of how she sees herself is welcome.

Ruptures can be a product of teachers' understandings, something that we can further illustrate summarizing the representations of U.S. schools and education expressed by another teacher—*la maestra Y.*, a junior high teacher at a private school in Zacatecas. *La maestra* has never been in the United States. However, she trusted what her brother (who spent three years in the United States with his family) told her: "My brother was there [in the United States] with his kids. When his older daughter was going to start *la secundaria* [seventh grade], he decided to come back because everybody told him that the schools were really dangerous there, a lot of drugs. He was afraid his daughter would become a bad person, so he preferred to return to Mexico." *La maestra* not only described U.S. schools as risky institutions, but also claimed they represented in some sense the opposite of Mexican ones: "There, they have another lifestyle, different ideas. Everything is different."

Next, *la maestra Y.* admitted she did not know any transnational students matriculated in her own school. (In a very limited sample of the

school, our research team found three such students; if that sample was representative then the school may have had a dozen such students. It is our guess that she did know some of these students, but did not know their transnational histories.) Her vision on the transnational schooling experience arises from the stories of her nephew and niece: "Oh yeah, I remember my nephew. He was in sixth grade [when he came to Zacatecas]. He did not know much about our history—he was smart in mathematics, but did not know much about Mexican history, nothing about the Revolution or Independence. He was ignorant of a lot of things. He used to say: 'I feel bad, Mom, but I really do not know all those things.' I think that is why he repeated sixth grade; it was so hard for him." With an overgeneralized sense of what transnational school experience might mean (drawn from her nephew's experience) and a lack of awareness regarding which of her current students might be transnational, it is not hard to imagine la maestra Y. as an unwitting agent of everyday rupture.

Still, Gaby's case or the descriptions of maestra P. and maestra Y. are only interesting and perhaps sad oddities if we cannot place them within a larger context. But we can establish such a context by considering data from the rest of the study that Gaby's story comes from and from another study—an examination of a U.S. school district's response to rapid growth in its Latino newcomer enrollment. In our estimation, both studies illustrate that schools are not settings predisposed to affirm transnational students' full biographies. Nor, because of this, are they complete in readying students for possible transnational adult-hoods. If schools presume a task of welcome and affirmation, they see that task, at its broadest, to be a welcome or affirmation of affiliation to the nation-state.

The study described next, which was carried out in Georgia in the late 1990s, led us to engage in the second study, the study of transnational students in Mexico that helped us find Gaby. This next study provides a version of the same dilemmas from the U.S. side: How willing are U.S. districts to honor their transnational students' full biographies and, looking forward, how many are willing and able to have their schooling be preparatory for persistently transnational adulthood? To be sure, these may seem to be unfamiliar school tasks, but their absence and related partial denial of transnational student ontologies constitute and precipitate the everyday ruptures negotiated by transnational youth.

Here, but Perhaps Not Staying

Throughout the 1990s, Dalton, Georgia (in the U.S. South), the self-described “Carpet Capital of the World,” provided an attractive job list for a growing number of Latino workers and thus also became the place of residence for their families, including school-age children. In the mid-1990s, when we first started work in this community, the majority of Latino children enrolled in Dalton schools were foreign born, mainly from Mexico (Hamann 2003). The school district’s response was uneven but substantive, and it assumed that the newcomer population needed the skill sets that mattered locally and nationally (e.g., English skills), but not necessarily transnationally.

Dalton’s emergence as a key site for “education in the new Latino diaspora” (Wortham, Murillo, and Hamann 2002) was the reason the two authors of this paper met and ultimately found Gaby. Zúñiga went to Dalton in 1996 when a NAFTA-related business connection between Dalton executives and industrialists based in Monterrey, Mexico, led to an invitation for Zúñiga’s university, the Universidad de Monterrey (UdeM), to serve as a consultant for Dalton’s schools as they negotiated an unprecedented demographic transformation. Zúñiga headed UdeM’s participation in what became known as the Georgia Project. Hamann, a doctoral student looking for a site in Georgia to study the schooling of Latinos, was invited at the same time to help Dalton Public Schools draft a federal Title VII—Systemwide Bilingual Education grant that was to provide key resources for the Georgia Project.

We were both invited there because local leaders, including school district leaders, wanted help serving the rapidly growing Latino enrollment, which climbed from 4 percent in 1989 to a majority in 2001. Just what those local leaders were seeking varied (as described at length in Hamann 2003) and was sometimes both ambiguous and contradictory. Yet two ideas that they did seem to agree upon were that (a) the rapidly growing Latino population was a permanent population—that is, it intended to stay—and (b) it was the schools’ task to teach the children of the newcomers how to succeed academically and otherwise in Dalton, Georgia. In other words, the inclusive, but perhaps not fully biographically responsive, charge for schooling—to prepare students for the community, region, and nation where they were—was to be extended to the newcomers.

Based on this agreement, the four-component, binational Georgia Project was created, formalizing a role for UdeM to help the Dalton com-

munity, particularly the schools. The initial plan for the Georgia Project was not necessarily only assimilation oriented. It included plans to invite teachers from Mexico to work in Dalton schools, plans to engage Georgia teachers in summer professional development travel study in Mexico, a proposed bilingual overhaul of the whole K-12 curriculum, and a community study intended to identify local Latino leaders, discover Latino newcomers' views on educational opportunities for both K-12 and adult education, and initiate political leadership training. Yet, understanding assimilation as a change process in which one group becomes more like another (Gordon 1964), our claim that assimilation was the goal of local school and community leaders was borne out by the varying fates of each component.

The least successful initiative was the bilingual curriculum overhaul, which was officially agreed to, talked about in the abstract for eighteen months, and then unilaterally rejected by Dalton educational leaders. Despite successfully bidding for a Systemwide Bilingual Education grant in 1997, school district leaders ultimately saw no enduring need for the district to have the capacity to offer all its instruction in its two most represented languages. They were modestly amenable to elementary-level transitional bilingual education (TBE), but the point of that kind of a program was to offer instruction in Spanish only as long as necessary to assist a student's academic progress before that student was ready for a classroom environment of only English. Spanish was not opposed in Dalton, but nor was it seen as having enduring value.

The summer travel study for Georgia teachers in Mexico was originally more successful, as seventeen teachers (of more than three hundred in the district) spent an intense month in Monterrey in 1997 learning Spanish, Mexican history, and Mexican curriculum and instruction. Yet despite their rave reviews of the experience (and the decision by several 1997 participants to repeat the experience in 1998), the 1998 summer program was decidedly smaller than the first year's. In 1999, a program change to have only two weeks in Mexico and two at Dalton State College briefly revived the program, but by 2002, after a change in superintendents, Dalton was no longer willing to support teachers for even the modified two-week/two-week experience. The travel-study program faded away because the Dalton leaders who initially hazily embraced it ultimately offered little conceptual support for it. Program participants were not encouraged to share their learning with colleagues. A different curricular intervention—a highly scripted initiative called Direct Instruction (which among many things reduced teachers' professional

autonomy and discretion and thus limited their application of professional knowledge)—undercut the rationale for having Dalton teachers better understand the context from which a growing number of students and parents were coming. Returning to the idea of everyday ruptures, a professional development strategy that helped teachers adapt curriculum and instruction to be more familiar to newcomers (that is, to diminish the rupture experienced by newcomer students) was allowed to wither away because the idea that such expertise was needed was not found sufficiently salient.

The most successful and visible Georgia Project initiative brought UdeM-trained teachers to serve as visiting instructors in Dalton schools. The first cohort, which arrived in October 1997, consisted of single, bilingual, young women who, perhaps not unrelated to their publicly acknowledged attractiveness, were welcomed seemingly everywhere they went. Yet if their presence was welcome, their competence was not, at least not fully. As an accommodation to Georgia's teaching certification requirements (which did not recognize credentials from a U.S.-accredited Mexican university as sufficient for full professional status), the visiting instructors were welcomed as paraprofessionals and, as such, always had to obtain formal approval for their activities from a Georgia-certified teacher. As paraprofessionals, it was their task to respond to the lesson plans of the lead instructor. Of course, this design ignored the certified instructors' lack of expertise with Mexican newcomer students as the reason the visiting instructors had been sought in the first place (and it ignored the Mexican instructors' being brought in under H1-B visas, a category that allows jobs to be offered to those with high skills for which there is an inadequate domestic supply).

Not long after their arrival, as the bilingual curriculum they had been told they would help implement was rejected and the scripted, phonics-intensive Direct Instruction model was introduced across the district, the visiting instructors found themselves working with small groups of students teaching English phonetic pronunciations. Per this curricular adjustment, newcomer students from Mexico were taught by teachers from Mexico who, per script, were not supposed to reference their shared cultural background and orientation as a pedagogical resource.

Almost immediately, program coordinators at UdeM questioned the use of the visiting instructors for Direct Instruction. Still, assisting with its implementation remained one of their tasks for as long as the Georgia Project persisted in Dalton. Ultimately, UdeM suspended the visiting in-

structor part of the Georgia Project in 2000 when a new superintendent in Dalton eliminated an extra compensation—free use of a van—that had been extended to the visiting instructors. While UdeM's response may seem dramatic for loss of a relatively modest perk, it is important to see the van's cancellation through a symbolic lens. As long as the UdeM partners felt that there was recognition in Dalton of the expertise and knowledge that the visiting instructors brought to Georgia—and the van was tangible evidence of such a perspective—the UdeM partners could tolerate the idea of a state-level government bureaucracy (that is, Georgia's education laws) blocking their teachers' full recognition. Even in the face of Direct Instruction, the van was proof of local recognition of the visiting instructors' expertise. When that was taken away, it meant the fully trained, UdeM-originating visiting instructors were no longer distinguished from any of the district's other paraprofessionals.

Put another way, the UdeM visiting instructors originally brought in because they could communicate better with newcomer students quickly found support for that communication constrained by a curricular change that rejected curricular adaptations that attended to the knowledge and background that newcomer students brought with them to school. Then the program ultimately ended when the local modification that had acknowledged that the visiting instructors were better trained and brought relevant information from and about Mexico and Mexican schooling was terminated. It was still acknowledged that the visiting instructors brought skills that were relevant to the educational tasks of Dalton schools, but in the end, it was decided that trained professionals with Spanish skills and familiarity with Mexican ways were not worth any more than untrained paraprofessionals. So an attempt to reduce everyday ruptures for students with migration experiences ended.

Each of the Georgia Project examples considered so far references how portions of Mexican newcomer students' biographies were not valued in the Dalton context, but the final piece of the Georgia Project also raises a different point. It highlights that, at least for a few, the assimilative assumption governing Dalton's participation in the Georgia Project was characterized not only by paternalism or dismissiveness, but also by its mismatch with many students' future trajectories.

The fourth part of the Georgia Project agreement supported UdeM sociologists conducting a multifaceted community needs assessment, as well as some adult leadership-training activities. It is the needs assessment that pertains here, although not because it was locally consequential. It mostly was not. The ten findings of the assessment were politely

received and then, except to the extent it confirmed any existing efforts, it was largely ignored.

The fourth of the ten findings did, however, appear to confirm one of the operating assumptions that helped support the Dalton partners' participation. That finding, summarized at the beginning of the needs assessment report, noted: "Dalton's Hispanic community is an established community that believes in building its future in Dalton and [surrounding] Whitfield [County]. This contradicts the idea that the Hispanic community is a temporary migrant community with no roots planted in community life" (Hernández-León et al. 1997, 2). In other words, the finding confirmed that the Georgia Project needed to happen because the Mexican newcomers were there to stay. This claim of general permanence was well grounded. In an article published in *Social Science Quarterly*, Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2000) presented the data that had led to their fourth conclusion. They noted that in a survey of more than a hundred Latino parents in Dalton, they found that only 22 percent of fathers and 24 percent of mothers did not expect to still be in the studied community three years in the future.

Yet, as accurate as it was, the finding left intact two hazards: (1) its attendance to the need for Dalton schools to be responsive to newcomer students' biographies was only partial; and (2) it left unconsidered the issue of what should happen to those who were not permanent. Let us attend to these in turn. Because the Mexican newcomers formed a permanent, if new, segment of the community, one available civic understanding was that the newcomers needed to be integrated. But this posture did not necessarily mean that newcomers were welcome to help shape a new definition of community, only that they needed to be taught what it meant to be *of* Dalton. For the majority of newcomer children then, schooling that was devoted to developing skills, identities, and relationships needed for this new place (that is, for Georgia or the United States) was supported. However, this schooling could sometimes be jarring, confusing, or unexpected because what the newcomers brought to the classroom linguistically, culturally, or just in terms of previous school experience was not necessarily known, valued, or built upon. Everyday ruptures were not foreclosed.

Yet we can also ask about those whose futures might not have been in Dalton, Georgia, or even the United States. First, again referencing the parent survey, intending to stay is not the same as actually being able to stay. So some who intended to stay may not have. Second, nearly a fourth of the interviewed parents thought they would likely move on. Where

they would move on to or when was not clear, but national reporting related to the recession following September 11, 2001, identified Dalton as one of the harder impacted communities and reported that many families were returning to Mexico (e.g., Recio 2002, Robertson 2002). In other words, some students who had been in Dalton continued their schooling somewhere else. Indeed, we found two such former Dalton students in rural Zacatecas, Mexico, in the study briefly further described in the next section.

More recently, with ICE raids happening all over the country and U.S.- and foreign-born Latinos telling Pew Hispanic Center pollsters that the reception for Latinos in the United States had become chillier (Lopez and Minushkin 2008), it seems plausible that even more newcomer students who used to be in Dalton schools might have moved on. Our concern is whether the schooling in Dalton was responsive to such a possibility. Did Dalton schooling cultivate the skills needed to live someplace else? Particularly if that someplace else was Mexico? The fates of the various Georgia Project components suggest not. The daily messages Latinos encountered in Dalton schools varied in their degree of welcome (Gitlin et al. 2003), but they were not oriented toward the prospect that some of the students needed to maintain or continue to develop skills that were consistent with a Mexican self-identity or the orientation and substance of schooling in Mexico. As with Gaby, who went from Chicago to Mexico, students with experience in Dalton were set up to encounter everyday ruptures if they relocated to Mexico. For some this would be a second experience of everyday ruptures, as what they had encountered in Dalton may also have been incompletely biographically responsive.

Transnational Students in Nuevo León and Zacatecas

Nonetheless, our sense of students' day-to-day realities in Dalton was limited. Our research designs there considered children only indirectly (focusing instead on administrative maneuvering or the design of the summer teacher institutes, for example). As our projects in Dalton had largely wound down by 2001, we could only consider conjecturally what happened to children who left Dalton, or to Latino newcomers in other U.S. locales who left where they were. To answer this question more directly, we hypothesized that some former Latino-newcomer students might be in Mexico (where they or their parents were born) and we secured funding from Mexico's Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología

Table 7.1

States	Mexican	American	Mexican American	Total
Nuevo León	56.6%	6.3%	37.1%	100%
Zacatecas	60.9%	6.0%	33.1%	100%

Source: survey UDEM-CONACYT Nuevo León 2004; Zacatecas 2005. Subsample of students from fourth grade of *primaria* through third (ninth) grade of *secundaria* (Nuevo León, $n=203$; Zacatecas, $n=165$).

(CONACYT) to see if we could find them and learn about both their U.S. school experiences and their Mexican ones. Beginning in 2004, our CONACYT funding allowed us to visit 1,673 randomly selected classrooms in a stratified random sample of 387 schools in the states of Nuevo León and Zacatecas. At these schools we surveyed 25,702 students—8,021 as part of brief whole-class oral interviews with those in the first three grades of *primaria* and 17,638 using written questionnaires. Those methods helped us locate 512 students with U.S. school experience, of whom 413 were in older grades and gave us written responses. Additionally, we interviewed 121 students with U.S. school experiences and twenty-five teachers about students with such experience. The vignette about Gaby, shared earlier, comes from these interviews. The data in Table 7.1, which highlights how a number of these children did not identify as Mexican or as only Mexican, come from the written survey. The data were generated from a forced-choice question asking (in Spanish) whether students identified as Mexican, American, Mexican American, or other.³ After “other” there was a space for students to fill in a different label, but as Table 7.1 shows, none did.

As in Dalton, where the majority of Latino newcomer parents felt that they would stay, the majority of transnational students that we found in Mexican schools identified singularly as Mexican, although their understanding of “Mexican” may or may not have matched that of their mononational peers and these students too may have had to negotiate everyday ruptures related to identity. Nevertheless, we draw attention to the smaller portion of students (more than 40 percent combined) who indicated that they self-identified as Mexican American or American. For this smaller but substantial portion of students, we can be more certain that the everyday curriculum would promote an identity and a be-

longing that did not (fully) fit. In other words, just as the Adrienne Rich quote earlier in the chapter suggested, for these students the curriculum would be a source of partial invisibility and thus rupture.

Raising the prospect that the curriculum was not the only quotidian source of rupture, when we asked the large number of students in our sample who lacked transnational experience whether peers with such experience were or were not like everyone else, many answered that transnational students were different. Among our 7,576 fourth- through ninth-grade student sample of Zacatecas, 5,028 answered the question "Are transnational children the same as or different from us?" Forty percent ($n=2,511$) of mononational students considered "different" those who had studied in the United States (regardless of those students' country of birth). Their responses allow us to describe with some details their representations. On the one hand, they frequently pointed out the dissimilarities in language they observed: "they do not speak like us"; "they speak more English than Spanish"; "they do not understand us"; "they cannot read"; "it is strange the way they speak." Others described other types of dissimilarity. First, attitudes: "they are showy boys"; "I said they are not like us because they are arrogant, they feel they are richer than us"; "they are so serious"; "they are silent"; "I say they are shy"; "they hate us." Second, cultural traits: "they have other customs"; "they learned other traditions"; "they are more *laissez-faire* than us"; "they act like gang members"; "they are not able to live in small towns." Third, apparent defects and faults: "they are fat"; "they are not like us because they ugly"; "they are not Mexican, they are gringos"; "they are disrespectful of our norms." Finally, ethnic characteristics: "they are whites"; "they are blond." However, unexpectedly, an important proportion of responses acknowledged positive differences: "they [are] smarter than us"; "they are bilingual"; "they are more school oriented than us"; "they are more respectful of school norms than us"; "they learn better"; "they [are] hard-working students." As we have described elsewhere, this bifurcated perspective among mononational students in Zacatecas about their transnational peers drove us to this conclusion: "the construction of otherness for transnational students in the micro-society of Mexican schools appeared less than solidified or unanimous; different viewpoints coexisted, creating a paradoxical mix of welcome and unwelcome" (Zúñiga and Hamann 2009, 344–45).

From the standpoint of everyday ruptures, this marking of difference could also translate into different treatment. We have written previously of Rosa (Hamann, Zúñiga, and Sánchez García 2006), a seventh-grade

student we encountered in Nuevo León who had spent all her life in U.S. schools excepting the two months prior to our visit to her school. She was clearly viewed as different, as everyone in her class pointed at her when we asked if there was anyone in her class that had gone to school in the United States. Later, in an interview, she complained that her classmates had stolen all her markers for art and that she suspected that the crayons she owned would likely be pilfered next. In turn, Serrano (1998) has written vividly of Nuyoricans, who, having vividly identified themselves with Puerto Rico, move to the island and find that island-native student peers are resistant to fully including them and mock their language, their accents, and other of their ways. In other words, school is a forum where peers, as well as the curriculum and perspectives of teachers, can be a source of rupture.

The Underexamined Assumptions of Schooling and National Membership

There is a long literature on schools as agents of enculturation (learning one's own culture), acculturation (learning a new culture), and deculturation (finding one's existing cultural identity challenged or ignored). Because these ideas are so deeply embedded in anthropology—see, for example, the various well-known efforts at creating terminological taxonomies of cultural acquisition like those in Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1967[1936] and Barnett et al. 1954—they do not need a lot of further explanation here, with two exceptions. First, we accept Teske and Nelson's (1974) point that different authors use these three terms in different ways, hence our delineation of how we understand them. Second, we see the idea of acculturation as a large umbrella that includes the idea of assimilation, although the two terms are not synonymous.

Assimilation, like acculturation, refers to the acquisition of a new body of cultural knowledge and deportments (Gordon 1964; Park and Burgess 1970[1921]). But unlike some kinds of acculturation, assimilation assumes a change in the assimilated person's orientation to a new cultural identity and the new society's acceptance of that person's new identity. Grey (1991, 80) summarizes an important component of assimilation: "Assimilation . . . is a one-way process in which the outsider is expected to change in order to become part of the dominant culture." By emphasizing the processual nature of assimilation, its unilateral orientation, and the unequal power differential between outsider and insider,

Grey's definition echoes Teske and Nelson's (1974) and that of the Social Science Research Council's Seminar on Acculturation of 1953, which declared: "Assimilation implies an essentially unilateral approximation of one culture in the direction of the other, albeit a changing or ongoing other" (Barnett et al. 1954, 988). In other words, while acculturation is definitionally agnostic in regard to whether the learner of new cultural forms uses that knowledge to attempt to embrace a new identity, assimilation presumes that such a change should be promoted or expected. Thus, when schools face an acculturative rather than enculturative task—that is, when the cultural identity valued at schools differs from the student's sense of self—it is the assimilationist presumption of school that makes schools inadequately responsive to their students' biographies. Similarly, it is the assimilationist presumption, which presumes the irrelevance of large swaths of students' identities and experiences, that is a source of everyday ruptures for students who know and feel attachment to more than one place.

It is a premise of this chapter that schools almost always see their task as enculturative (learning the dominant culture that one is born into) or assimilative (learning the dominant culture that one was not born into and neglecting or rejecting the culture of origin). This is hardly surprising, as around the world the advent of state-supported, broad public schooling has routinely and purposefully been identified with the task of building the nation and shaping society (Brickman 1964; Dewey 1902; Luykx 1999). Texts about or arguing for the founding of public education in Mexico, like Gamio's (1916) *Forjando Patria* (Forging a Nation) and Booth's (1941) *Mexican School-Made Society*, illustrate this principle for that country. So too, for the United States, do myriad texts of long vintage. Both Earl Warren's opinion for the unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and Harvard president James Conant's lectures at Teachers College in November 1945 (Conant 1945a, 1945b, 1945c), which were each titled "Public Education and the Structure of American Society," offer American visions for school as a core instrument for fashioning a coherent and unified, if socioeconomically heterogeneous, society. A contemporary of Dewey and Conant, the progressive educator George Counts, identified as U.S. school tasks the challenges of assuring material well-being, including among immigrant and racial minorities; cultivating global leadership and human flowering; and securing democracy. Then he promised: "That such tasks cannot be accomplished by education alone is of course readily granted. Yet it is equally evident that

they will never be accomplished without the assistance that organized education can provide" (1952, 21).

Offering a more contemporary version of the same sentiment, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and Carolyn Sattin recently argued that "schools are failing to properly educate and ease the transition and integration of large and growing numbers of immigrant youth arriving in Europe and North America; many quickly become marginalized as racially, ethnically, religiously, and linguistically marked minority groups" (2007, 3). Here again the task of school is understood as promoting opportunity in the newcomer student's new host society. Left out is any emphasis on continuing to develop the capacity to succeed in the environments from which a newcomer came and might return.

So it should be clear that a long-term task of schools, one that has been formally advocated even by progressive educators, is to tie students to the nation-state that is providing schooling. There are reasons to be dubious of the deculturative presumption of assimilationist schooling for newcomers. There are also reasons to question, for the majority, whether the enculturative intent of their schooling suffices for the social goal of creating equal opportunity, but those are not the core arguments here. Rather we want to emphasize the mismatch, and resulting daily ruptures at school, for those students whose national attachments are plural or to a nation different from where they are attending school. As the unequal penetration of globalization continues to dislocate families and thus children (as the other chapters here so eloquently describe), increasing numbers of children negotiate schools that do not describe them completely and that are not organized for their success—neither academic success nor a sense of affirmed group identity. Carola Suárez-Orozco recently noted: "Individuals who adopt a self-referential label that includes their parents' country of origin seem to do better in school than their counterparts who select a pan-ethnicity (such as Hispanic or Latino) or who refer to only their country of residence (such as American)" (2004, 180). In other words, Mexican newcomer students in places like Dalton should fare better if they identify as Mexican. Following the same logic, transnational students we found in Mexico who identify as American (and who in many instances were born in the United States) should fare better if they preserve their sense of American identity. Yet in both these instances, schools try to make a dissuading case.

The students we studied did not make the relocation decision, whether they were in Georgia or Mexico. They nonetheless did have per-

spectives on their relocation and schooling. Thus, a student in Zacatecas (Mexico) chafed at the gender and comportment expectations of her current school, though she had thrived previously in a gifted and talented program in Pennsylvania (United States). Another student was adamant she never wanted to return to the United States because she did not want to have to live ever again with her father; she had not fared well in school in either country. A third student claimed a desire to become a teacher of English, perhaps in the United States but perhaps in Mexico. In her case, her professional goal related to skills that she had developed in both the United States and Mexico and that were valued in both places (albeit more narrowly in Mexico).

For transnational students whose “life worlds are neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’, but at once *both* ‘here’ and ‘there’” (Smith 1994, 17, emphasis in the original), school can be a source of slights, of challenges to identity, and of ruptures. Looking at the gloomy graduation rate of Latinos in Dalton, Georgia (Hamann 2003) or at the difficult cases we sometimes encountered in Mexico, we see that some children do not overcome these ruptures, and they are marked as not successful or capable by the formal institutions of the state (that is, the school); many do not have much of a favorable sense of self. Yet we would be incompletely relating the findings of our two studies if we focused only on this negative side. Some students are resilient. Some overcome or transcend the ruptures or do their own successful reconciliations of what school teaches and what they need. Still, it seems unfair to make this reconciliation the work of the children. Would it not be better, if difficult initially to imagine, if schools were not sites of everyday rupture?