

Fall 2013 University Seminar
“On the Future of Anthropology in Schools of Education”
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Transnational Research in Education and Schooling

The feminization of Mexican migration to the United States is increasing, and more mothers who immigrate leave their children behind for long periods to be cared for by grandparents or relatives in Mexico who don't know how to read and write. We know little about how transnational familial ties across the U.S. -Mexico border influence the educational aspirations and social trajectories of this group of children. My dissertation research asks how Mexican maternal migration has influenced the education, migration aspirations, and social opportunities of the children left behind in Mexico, comparing these to their siblings who were brought over to America or who were born in the United States. In this presentation I address how transnational research and ethnography is an important methodological part of understanding familial ties and education trajectories across borders. There is a need for more transnational, comparative research on the lives of siblings who grow up apart, on the lives of those who move “back” or that go to different countries and cities temporarily.

I have designed my research in such way that I was able to move from homes to schools in both countries and understand the challenges and hardships these families face in both Puebla and New York City. I observed children and youth coming back home from school in a small village in Puebla and finding their grandparents not being able to help them with homework, while their U.S. born siblings experienced similar difficulties as their mothers were not able to understand English and help them with homework. Teachers in both sides of the border described the relationships at home as an issue for the academic achievement of children and youth. How can the field of anthropology and education not only embrace but also produce more work and research on transnational schooling and education? How can we further transnational multi-sited research without losing the depth of ethnographic research?