

Generaciones' Narratives

SECTION	Chapter 2
TITLE	<i>Generación</i> 1951-1960: Cubbyhole Gateways, Micro-Tear Zones, and Self-Sponsorship
AUTHOR	John Scenters-Zapico
OVERVIEW	<p>This chapter follows a <i>generación</i> spanning nine years. The participants, born between 1951-1960, lived in a time of economic prosperity in the United States and are old enough to have lived through the psychology of the Cold War. While this is a <i>generación</i> that experienced peace, it also lived through the threat of nuclear annihilation and the end of the Vietnam War. In this chapter appear several individuals from the poor side of the divide in both the U.S. and Mexico, yet because of opportunities and lucky fate (gateways and sponsors) they have been able to make do with frayed bootstraps.</p>
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Generación 1951-1960: Cubbyhole Gateways, Micro-Tear Zones, and Self-Sponsorship

John Scenters-Zapico

Growing up, the story I remember most about my mother reading and writing is when she had the English/Spanish 33 1/3 LPs and workbooks. She used these to learn to understand and speak the English language. Although she still doesn't speak the language fluently she is able to understand the English language and communicate effectively. She must have done her "lessons" while we were at school because I don't remember ever seeing her do them. I know of one time when I put on one of the records to see what it was all about. It seemed pretty boring; all you heard was a man's monotone voice. (Laura Schuster¹)



A mi papa le gustaba leer novelas y un tiempo yo las leia. El decias que aprendias distintas formas de decir cosas. (Activate video for Susana Corella's expanded commentary on her father's role)



In this chapter nine participants are united as a "conjunto de personas que por haber nacido en fechas próximas y recibido educación e influjos culturales y sociales semejantes, se comportan de manera afin o comparable en algunos sentidos" ("Real Academia Española"). This chapter, along with Chapters 3 and 4, follow *generaciones* spanning nine years each. These participants, born between 1951-1960, lived in a time of economic prosperity in the United States and are old enough to have lived through



¹ Student in one of Scenters-Zapico's classes.



the psychology of the Cold War. While this is a *generación* that experienced peace, it also lived through the threat of nuclear annihilation and the end of the Vietnam War. In this chapter I introduce several individuals from the poor side of the divide in both the U.S. and Mexico, yet because of opportunities and lucky fate (gateways and sponsors) they have been able to make do with frayed bootstraps.

One world event brought up by several participants was the Iran crisis of 1979-80. This chapter's participant, Irma Mohammadi, lived in Iran for fourteen years and was there during the conflict with the United States. Her remaining memories of this event are that in October 1979, the exiled Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini), came to the United States for medical care. In November 1979, a mob of Iranians seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took sixty-six employees hostage, and in March 1980 then-President Jimmy Carter froze Iran's assets and ordered a rescue of the hostages by helicopter. Three of the helicopters crashed and eight people died. In addition to worldwide conflict and change, technology began to play an important role in the lives of this chapter's participants.

In regards to technology, Laura Schuster saw computers "as more in the upper echelon of society." Unlike the case studies of Mary, Paula, and Karen in *Literate Lives*, who saw computers as "leading the way in efforts to teach young people computing" (Selfe and Hawisher 12), Schuster "considered them part of a larger more sophisticated business society. When I was in school, public schools did not provide technological literacy that would prepare us for the future, except for typing classes." Culturally, a silent undertow of difference exists between the U.S. and Mexico. Irma Mohammadi stated that her parents "thought that Juárez was the best place to grow up" and she felt the same: "I loved to live there and I did not want to come to the U.S." (Activate video for Irma's expanded commentary on the seamlessness of the border). At the same time her





parents were happy that they could send her to a good university in El Paso² and fortunately UTEP is right across the *Río Bravo*. Though she lives in El Paso now, Irma's connection to culture, language, family, and friends in Juárez is undeniable. Chapter participant Laura Maria Dominguez's experience on the border as a first *generación* Latina *americana* at this time has "typical" effects in the slow distancing from Mexican culture and language. Her parents

were born and raised in the United States. Although my grandparents on my mother's side were born in Mexico, we did not have close family members living in Mexico. My grandmother and grandfather's siblings also immigrated to the United States when my grandparents did. Occasionally, I heard my grandfather or grandmother talk about some distant relative still in Mexico. My parents, siblings, and I never traveled into the interior of Mexico. We would only go across the border to occasionally purchase certain groceries or go to the Mercado. We ate there once in a while. However, we never discussed Mexico in depth.

Of note is the back-and-forth flow of generational sponsorship that occurs with family and with many of the "older" participants. The technological literacies needed in schools, and that many of these are learned in the home, clearly serves as a warning for everyone. In *Generaciones* and other studies looking at traditional literacy we find that literacy is taught by an older *generación* to a younger. Today, however, with electronic literacies that flow moves back and forth: It reaches back with one *generación* serving as indirect sponsor by supporting or purchasing technology for a younger one, and the younger *generación* then reaching forward and serving as direct sponsor by teaching technological literacies to the older one.

The participants in this chapter bring to focus three new concepts. First is the idea of the "cubbyhole gateway": Many minimum wage jobs, such as cashier at a fast food restaurant, are characterized in many publications as without value. *Generaciones*, to the contrary, has found that this popular view is incorrect. Low-paying jobs often require that participants learn and use technologies they never imagined they could competently use before. They are trained by the company they work for, and oftentimes

² UTEP has an agreement with Juárez residents. They can study at UTEP for in-state tuition, avoiding either International or out-of-state tuition, which would prohibit most from studying at UTEP. Economically disadvantaged students from Juárez also are eligible for scholarships.



once they attain a level of literacy with a particular technology, they have the confidence to learn new electronic literacies. In this chapter we discover a few participants who started at the “bottom” of the workplace chain, but advanced because of their growing confidence. Next is the “micro-tear zone” (MTZ). In the MTZ participants reveal the long-term positive and negative effects that sponsors, especially family and teachers, can have on their literacy growth. The last concept is “self-sponsorship.” Unlike past traditional literacies, whereby a family member or teacher helped a learner read and write, we discover with electronic literacies that learners must overwhelmingly teach themselves.

Migrations from Mexico to U.S.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Migration 1</u>	<u>Current Residence</u>
<i>Luz Martinez</i>	1955	Juárez, MX	Bell, CA	El Paso, TX
<i>Angelica M.</i>	1959	Juárez, MX	El Paso, TX	El Paso, TX
<i>Adolfo Lopez</i>	1954	Juárez, MX	El Paso, TX	El Paso, TX
<i>Martha Iglesias</i>	1955	Juárez, MX	El Paso, TX	El Paso, TX

Luz Martinez, Angelica M., Adolfo Lopez, and Martha Iglesias were all born in Mexico and came at different stages in their lives to the U.S. In the world around them, frightening political events were taking place in the U.S., such as John F. Kennedy’s assassination. For Señora Luz Martinez, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement started near her neighborhood in Los Angeles, California, and she also recalled the farmers’ boycotts, the César Chávez farm workers, and the Vietnam anti-war demonstrations.

*Señora Luz Martinez*³ was born in 1955 in Juárez, grew up in Bell, California, and now lives in El Paso. She came from a large family of ten with very little money. Her home had three bedrooms, one for boys, one for girls, and one for her parents. The family was traditional in that the girls cooked, cleaned, and took care of younger siblings. These traditional practices serve as clear examples of gender bias at the time toward females gaining a higher education.

³ Student in one of Scenters-Zapico’s classes.



Luz's family practiced alternative literacies, the kind left unmeasured by mainstream literacy statistics. The family made trips to a local library to read and check out books, and at home her parents read the Bible and medical-herbal books for health and healing. For traditional literacy practices, libraries are truly a great equalizing resource because patrons do not have to purchase their reading materials in order to practice reading or to keep up with the latest offerings. The Martinez family had available a variety of reading materials and with such a large family there was always someone reading and talking about what they had read. Of the selection of readings left around the house, many were shared; these ranged from Life, Newsweek, and National Geographic, to an assortment of novels, fairy tales, and music books. In one of her class projects Luz mentioned that her mother regularly wrote letters to family in Mexico and to her sons who were in the military. This traditional form of common letter writing today is becoming more and more uncommon, replaced by other electronic mediums such as email, texting, and videoconferencing. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, El Paso is ranked first in texting in the U.S.

Luz attended elementary school in the inner city of Bell, California, and learning English was a challenge for her in first and second grades, where she was placed in English as a Second Language classes. When she started school, she recalled that it was mostly white, eventually becoming integrated with about 50% Latinos/as. At that time she said she was not inspired as a student and read "only what was required." Her goal in elementary school was to grow up to be a secretary, a job requiring reading, writing, and typing skills. High school was uneventful for her and her goal, once she graduated from high school, was to become a fashion designer.

Gender biases also existed for this chapter's participants, and Luz was no exception. Her parents were traditional in that they believed women should work in the house, while men should go on for advanced study and then work outside the home. Like Victoria Montoya in Chapter 1, her parents "only stressed education to males and not females." Luz, however, did not heed this advice. A student at UTEP, Luz also works with the Texas Attorney General as a Locate Specialist, a job she described as finding where missing individuals are located. The position has served as a cubbyhole gateway in that it taught her to use computers and gain confidence to learn more electronic literacies; it also instilled in her the confidence to begin university studies at UTEP. Learning electronic literacies like the ones she practiced in Scenters-Zapico's



computers and writing course is difficult for her outside of school settings because of the financial burden technology raises. Luz indicated she now has access to a computer at work but cannot use email. She does use the Web, however, for work-related research, for which her co-workers served as her direct sponsors, teaching her to use the Internet for job-specific tasks.

A common pattern of an indirect electronic literacy sponsor who then becomes a recipient from a family member's direct electronic literacy sponsorship took place in Luz's home in 1996 when she bought a computer for her home for her children. With the new computer, Luz's son has become a direct electronic literacy sponsor for her by teaching her to take digital pictures, download them, and manipulate them on the home computer. In Chapter 1 a common view of computers in the home was that they were for work, not hobbies or social activities. However, Luz notes that she has moved past this mind frame because of the influence of her son; now she sees "an increase in computers in my future and more outside of work," as the next participant will reveal.

Born in 1959, *Señora Angelica M.* spent her first years in Juárez but grew up and presently resides in El Paso, where she is a successful accountant. Growing up "in the 60s we lived in a house in Juárez with three bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, and patio. . . . We had very little money. Only my mother had a job." She recalled a safe and happy childhood:


During the summer we used to play games in the street with all the kids in the neighborhood. We played hide and seek with a can. Someone threw the can and everyone hid and then the person had to try and find us, but the objective was to get back to the can and count 1-2-3 for me! Before being found. We also played house and used little dishes. My grandmother used to give us real food.

The almost magical powers of the survey and interview with the participants was especially rewarding because many recalled long-forgotten experiences, and in Angelica's case, whose daughter was in a class of mine, her daughter learned more about her mother. Examples like this illustrated the indelible connection between stories, memories, and recollection of literacies. Angelica recalled something she had completely forgotten: "Around Easter time," she began,



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my grandparents used to buy us kids little chicks that we kept as pets. When they grew big enough they were cooked into mole. We even had a pet duck for a while. His name was Pato Pancho. We used to dig a hole in the backyard and fill it with water so he could think it was a pond. We also had a dog named Sarina who played with the little “pollitos.” 

Clearly, the experience around Angelica’s home was one of enjoyment and of a family not as concerned with day-to-day needs. (Activate video on left for Angelica’s expanded commentary on growing up).



How would their comfortable home life encourage bilingualism and literacy practices? Angelica’s grandmother, who was a teacher, had an important influence in her life: “She used to help us with homework, especially math.” Her grandmother wrote often, especially letters to friends, and she

regularly saw her mother reading Reader’s Digest and one of the Juárez newspapers. Spanish was their first language, but her “mother learned English at Lydia Patterson⁴ as a teenager.” (Activate video on right for Angelica’s expanded commentary).



Once in El Paso, Angelica had available and practiced a variety of literacies. At Lamar Elementary School, a memorable fourth grade math teacher served as an early math literacy sponsor. This teacher “used

⁴ Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso, a business high school.



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to have flashcard times tables tests and if you got them all she gave you a Hershey bar in front of the whole class. I won several times.” The family also took advantage of a



nearby public library, about a thirty-minute walk from home, in order to read and check out books. It is worth mentioning that Angelica's *generación* was safer than today's in that children could still walk and ride their bikes some distance from home. (Activate video on left for Angelica's expanded commentary).

At this age Angelica's professional goal was traditional in that she wanted to be “a secretary or anything where you could push buttons like on a typewriter.” During her senior year in high school, she was able to

partially realize this goal when she obtained a job with the El Paso Times newspaper. The other benefit from this job was that it required her to read and write more than she normally would have. (Activate video on right for Angelica's expanded commentary).



While we hear in the news today about pressing border issues, especially illegal immigration to the U.S., these issues are not typically viewed similarly on the border. Considering many families here have relatives and friends on both sides of the border, Angelica's own view of the U.S.-Mexico border was succinct, yet telling: “It's normal to come from Mexico and go ‘home’ on weekends,” and that “basically El Paso was more a continuation of Juárez. It was the same thing.” The other implication in this view of free-flowing movement is the scope and variety of biculturalism and bilingualism. However, as the border tightens, many in these two communities now cross the river



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infrequently. This may play a role in reducing the ways that families are able to keep cultural and language contact between the two countries. (Activate video on left for Angelica's expanded commentary).



The Señora Angelica M. family purchased a computer for their home in 1988, so that *Señor M.* could complete more of his work at home. As in the prior chapter, we still see three patterns with early technology purchases for the home. First, the idea of a computer for hobby, personal learning, or games had not entered the mindset as of yet. Second, the computer was used for work at

home. Third, while employees are working more at home, they are also required in most cases to purchase their own technology and learn much of it on their own. (Activate video on right for Angelica's expanded commentary).





An important public gateway Angelica







attended was El Paso Community College (EPCC), where in 1995 she learned to design and publish printed documents and prepare oral presentation slides (such as PowerPoint). EPCC was significant for many participants in this research for two important reasons. (Activate video on left for Angelica's





expanded commentary). First, it created additional, formal opportunities for those like Angelica who have access to a computer at home or work, yet desire to learn newer literacies that they may never have imagined, thought possible, or simply ones that will expand their economic possibilities. Second, for those who do not have access at home or work, public gateways like EPCC are the only places to learn advanced skills in an affordable and certified setting, that is, one that can grant a degree or certificate.

 *Señor Adolfo Lopez* was born in 1954 in Juárez and grew up there. He now lives in El Paso, is unemployed because he is “desabilitado.” Growing up, “Teníamos poco dinero y solo teníamos para comer bien. En la casa que vivía en Juárez era muy pequeña era también muy fea.” Around the house he had several activities: “Yo no podía hacer tantas cosas en mi casa. Tenía que ayudar a mi mamá en lo que hacía en la casa como lavar trastes, tener las camas y traer lo necesario para comer.” It is significant to pay attention to the types of early homes participants describe because, more often than not, these determine the level and variety of literacy opportunities. 


 As an alternative literacy practice, Señor Lopez enjoyed reading comics as a child and his hero growing up was “Memin Pinguin que era de un libro cómico.” At the same time, he told me, “Yo quería ser como mi Papa. Quería ser como él en lo trabajador y responsable,” and then later in life, “Cuando yo era un adolescente yo quería ser como mi maestro para enseñar a los demás.” In these three sentences we see Adolfo’s maturity evolve from a youngster who looked to fantasy for heroes, to a growing respect for the hard work and responsibility his father displayed toward the family, and finally toward an educator, whom he admired as someone who helps others learn in life. 


 Adolfo’s literacy had two important influences: his mother and the El Paso schools. His mother devoted time to teaching him to read and write in Spanish while in Mexico, and once they moved to El Paso he attributes his learning to the El Paso public school system: “Yo aprendí a leer y a escribir porque mi mamá me enseñó y cuando aprendí inglés fue porque empecé a ir a la escuela en El Paso es por eso que se escribir y leer en inglés.” 


 His family’s poor economic condition also affected the time his parents could devote to educating their children. Here we understand a conflictive narrative. On the one hand, “Mis padres trabajaban y no tenían tiempo para mí,” and worked many hours to ensure 



the family was at least fed and consequently did not have much time to dedicate to the educational needs of their children. On the other hand, we see Adolfo's mother serving as a traditional direct sponsor, who did make the time to help him learn to read Spanish. Nevertheless, he attributes his learning to read and write in English to his schooling in El Paso. A parent or older guardian and teacher are two common direct sponsors on the border.

Despite his parents' busy schedules, Adolfo often observed both his parents reading and writing: "Si mi mama le gustaba leer novelas y a mi papa le gustaba leer el periodico. Si les gustaba escribirles a sus familiares cuando tenian tiempo." These practices boded well for Adolfo, unlike many others who did not have such active traditional literacy practices in the home. 

 Similar to other Mexico-born participants' views toward the U.S., his parents' changed over time from having the great American Dream to one of disillusion: "Pensaban que era un pais de oportunidades importaba y cuando creci comprendi que en este pais no hiba a progresar." For Adolfo and his family, the land of opportunity became a place where he knew he would never be able to move ahead. Crossing the water divide that the Rio Grande creates was doable for them, but the invisible divides have caused unimaginable damage.

 Their poor economic standing limited their education and ability to purchase technology, and so Adolfo's experience with and commentary about computers was brief: "No porque no teniamos dinero." Adolfo's life and his family's experiences in the U.S. have been difficult. The water divide of the Rio Grande did not prevent him from coming to this country, and yet the "digital divide" is invisible, not even appearing for them like a chimera on the desert. The digital divide is a socioeconomic experience: if you are on the good side of the socioeconomic divide you are more than likely on the good side of the digital divide, no matter what bank of the Rio Grande divide.

Now living in El Paso, *Señora Martha Iglesias* was born in 1955 and raised in Juárez. Unlike Señor Lopez, she described her home while growing up as medium-sized, with plenty of room, and financially her family was comfortable. Around the house Martha helped her mother with cleaning, washing, and ironing clothes. The educational opportunities she experienced stand in stark contrast to Adolfo's.



Martha's family valued writing, reading, and education. Her parents and grandparents often reminded her that an education was "considered very important in order to succeed in life" and this concept was reinforced in several ways. Her grandparents would regularly write letters, and her parents, in turn, "wrote to other family members and wrote shopping lists." To help Martha learn to pronounce and read well, her aunts and uncles would practice alternative literacy pedagogies with her: "Whenever they saw a sign or something legible, [they would] attempt to read it."

Middle school was near Martha's home in downtown Juárez, and Martha had two micro-tear zone memories. The first was in fifth grade and is a negative example. Her teacher used a "stick pedagogy, because he would hit our hands with a ruler if we misbehaved." The second experience is a positive micro-tear zone with her sixth-grade teacher, "because I was the teacher's pet."

Culturally, her family's view toward Mexico and the U.S. as she was growing up is a common one. They looked to the possible wealth the U.S. had to offer, yet for Martha Mexico was still home. "They [parents] liked living there [Mexico]" because of culture, language, and family, and looked to the U.S. because of a strong economy. Martha indicated that, "Growing up my father worked there and considered living there [the U.S.]. As a teenager we started getting passports and started to move. It would help in getting a job and living a better life."

As an adult with her own family today, Martha now has a computer available at home. In 1998 her husband selected and purchased a computer from a catalog. Through self-sponsorship, Martha learned several electronic literacies, and the same year she downloaded software from the Internet at home on her own, which she planned on learning. Furthermore, family members have directly sponsored her electronic literacies. Her daughter taught her to play computer games that same year.

Martha now works for El Paso Community College (EPCC), which has become a significant economic motivator and cubbyhole gateway for her advancement with electronic literacies. From 1997 through 1999 she learned to use email, download software, conduct research on the Web, and use other software. EPCC offered hands-on workshops for all of these. In 1998, during another training session at EPCC, she learned to design and publish printed documents and to prepare oral presentation slides



in PowerPoint. Her job and the ensuing training opportunities served as great cubbyhole gateway experiences, giving her the confidence one year later to teach herself at work to use online dictionaries, thesauruses, language translation software, and bibliography software. In 1999, to further enhance her abilities to work with visual images, she learned to take digital photographs and manipulate them on her own at work. The role that her job at EPCC served in creating an environment for her to develop electronic literacies and advance her job cannot be understated, from initial cubbyhole to catalyst. Importantly, while her work served as cubbyhole and direct sponsor, we must remember that EPCC provided these opportunities so she could become more productive at work. A price existed for her “opportunities” in the workplace. Martha is a secretary who has embraced new electronic literacies, yet they are ones her employer requires her to practice now.

Migrations from the U.S. to Mexico

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Migration 1</u>	<u>Current Residence</u>
<i>Susana Corella</i>	1960	El Paso, TX	Juárez, MX	Juárez, MX
<i>Laura Schuster</i>	1960	El Paso, TX	Juárez, MX	El Paso, TX
<i>Irma Mohammadi</i>	1960	El Paso, TX	Juárez, MX	El Paso, TX

Susana Corella, Laura Schuster, and Irma Mohammadi were all born in the U.S., yet for varying reasons and at a young age their families moved to Mexico to live. In terms of traditional and electronic literacies these three participants are fascinating portraits of socioeconomic classes and how they play an influential role with forms of literacy acquisition. Additionally, their bilingualism and biculturalism would most likely not register on national literacy scales like those touched upon in the Introduction and Chapter 1. They most likely would not register on any current literacy scale, but in future scales they might indeed be the yardstick because of their sophisticated bicultural abilities.

Señora Susana Corella was born in 1960 in El Paso, Texas, grew up, and went to school in Juárez. Growing up in a household with only her father working, she did not have many opportunities: “Mi mama no trabajaba, vivimos en casa de renta no sobraba mucho pero en lo general vivimos bien.” Her home was simple with two





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bedrooms, a bathroom, a living room, and a little patio in the back, where with her three sisters, “Jugabamos y hasta me ponía una banda en la caneza y en las muñecas. Lo disfrutabamos mucho.”

In elementary school in Juárez she learned to read and write. “Teníamos un cuaderno donde hacíamos el abecedario

mayúsculas y minúsculas después empezamos a formar sílabas y teníamos un libro que se llamaba el Libro Mágico donde había una página que era transparente y podíamos copiar lo que estaba abajo.” Unlike her American counterparts in elementary school, she was learning to be bilingual. At this time she was studying ten to twenty percent of her school lessons in English; moreover, she had the opportunity to hear English spoken and to speak it by easily crossing one of the six bridges uniting the

U.S. and Mexico. In secondary school in Juárez, she recalled having to read some challenging pieces in class, such as El Quijote, Los Miserables, and La Celestina. A revealing alternative literacy practice she had was “leer versos, poemas” and “me gustaba escribir versos desde que estaba en la secundaria y oír radio cantar y aprenderme la letra de las canciones.” (Activate video above on right for Susana’s expanded commentary).

Male gender influences continued to shape family practices in this *generación*. Susana tells a story of Mexico that is revealing about politics and political affiliation: “Toda mi vida he vivido en Juárez y mi papá trabajó toda su vida para Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX). No podían pensar mal de México lo que si recuerdo era que a mi papá y mamá lo oía discutir acerca de que a mi papá lo obligaban a votar por el PRI y lógico mi





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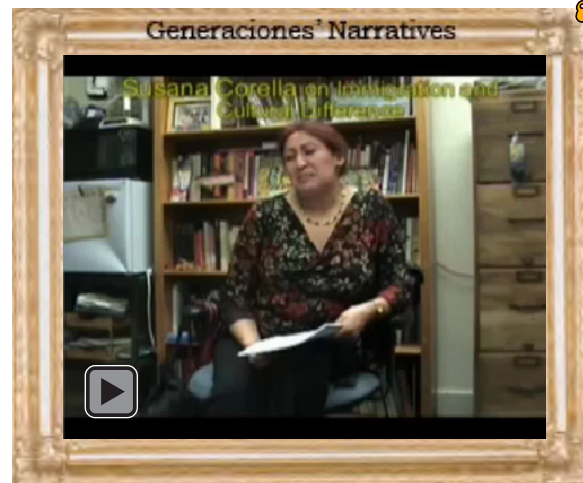


mama tambien.” (Activate video on left for Susana’s expanded commentary).

American readers may be quick to judge this election manipulation, but political affiliation/obligation in the U.S. is often similar. When I asked how she and her family felt about the U.S., she shared this story: “A mi papa le queria un señor no recuerdo su nombre de migracion arreglarle los papeles pero el nunca quiso decia que porque despues mi mama lo iba a mandar.” This is indicative of some of the *machismo* in



Mexican society. The point she stressed is that if they moved to the U.S., her mother would most likely leave her father. The implicit statement could be twofold, either reflecting American “liberal” views, or her father feared he would lose his absolute control over his wife and the family. (Activate video on right for Susana’s expanded commentary).



Susana’s first contact with computers occurred as an adult. The demands for her daughters to keep up with their schoolwork forced the family to purchase a computer:

“Cuando en la escuela le dejaban tarea a mis hijas tuvimos que comprara una.” At the time of this purchase, the factory where she worked in El Paso shut its doors and moved to Juárez. Consequently, she was laid off from work without any skills. It was during this economically difficult time, through her former employer’s compensation offer, that she decided to take a computer class at El Paso Community College (EPCC) to help her learn some electronic literacy skills that would help her obtain a new job. El Paso Community College (EPCC) is a cubbyhole gateway in that it taught her





technology and gave her confidence. Her initial motivation was economically motivated from the local impact that NAFTA had on the border.

While at EPCC she had several teachers who served as direct sponsors, teaching her to use the Web for accessing information, email for communication, play games, chat, and digitally manipulate images. Susana went from factory work as a manual laborer to learning to become electronically literate in several ways. She owes this to her own drive (via the economic hardship) and to EPCC for creating the program for displaced workers like her. Her experience in the program at EPCC was excellent, giving her the confidence to land her present job, in part because of her electronic literacies.

*Señora Laura Schuster's*⁵ parents moved the family to Juárez right after her birth in 1960. After living there for the first three years of her life, the family returned to El Paso in 1963: "I was young when we moved to the States and this is where my parents wanted to raise their family." Her home in El Paso where she grew up was "in town on the east side. It was a three bedroom house with a large backyard. My mother still lives there." Like other participants she believed her family was financially comfortable and does not recall ever being in need of anything.

Laura's early memories of literacy practices in the home are alternative in that they involve reading original texts in Spanish and their translations in English:

[I remember my] mother translating Spanish newspaper stories, magazine articles, sections of books or encyclopedias to English with help of a dictionary and her knowledge of words she already knew. My mother saves a lot of stuff so it is very easy to still run into a book and find old pages of things she has translated over the years.⁶

It was in this richly active bilingual literacy setting, with a mother intent on learning to speak and write English by translating everything she could get her hands on, that Laura recalled becoming involved in the same process with her mother, who recruited

⁵ A student in one of Scenters-Zapico's classes.

⁶ I asked if she could locate any of these that I might include in this chapter, but she was too busy with school, family, and work.



her to become involved in the process: “I sometimes had to translate mail or newspaper articles.” This extremely complicated biculturalism and bilingualism would not appear in any national literacy measure. Such extraordinary and alternative practices, because they are situated and contextual, most likely are unknown to researchers focused on mainstream cultural literacy and its measurements. Laura’s experience is unique; however, her story and many similar others showcase bilingualism. While some of the literacies in an L1 or L2 are more oral than written, others, like Laura’s, are more written.

In secondary school she was “not good at it Grammar, [and] writing reports.” At the same time she continued working with her mom translating a variety of documents. To help her focus and obtain resources for her schoolwork she would visit the school library as well as the public library. Even though her parents “could not speak English they always participated in the PTA⁷ and other activities.” In this bilingual and bicultural community most people are able to get by with Spanish as their only language, but unless they have a business catering only to Spanish speakers or one in Juárez, their economic potentials are limited.

Laura’s mother’s insistence to learn English through translations stands out for Laura and this has become a multigenerational practice that even the grandchildren are learning:

Every book and/or magazine my mother reads is in English. She has not allowed herself to take the easy way by obtaining information in Spanish to educate herself on current events. Now it is rare for her to call on someone to translate something for her. She also takes the time to sit with my children and read books to them or show them old encyclopedias. My love of reading must have come from watching my mother do these things. I try to educate myself in different areas so that I can be somewhat of a well-rounded person. Now my kids are always asking me what I’m reading or writing and what it means.

Unlike several of the participants in Chapter 1 who received mixed messages from parents about learning and speaking both English and Spanish, Laura experienced an

⁷ Parent-Teacher Association.



easier balance. Despite her mother's focus on learning English but speaking only Spanish, Laura commented that her mother "continues to encourage her grandchildren to learn to speak Spanish."

Schuster's awareness and experience with technology epitomizes my notion of cubbyhole gateways. She seemingly stumbled into jobs that both allowed and required her to hone her developing electronic literacy skills as well as created opportunities to keep learning. Her first experience in a cubbyhole gateway that allowed her to learn and advance to newer electronic literacies began in the 1980s

at the height of home video game systems. In the early 80s I worked in the electronics department in a department store. While I didn't have a video game system at home, I did have access to the store display models. Atari was the hot seller at \$99.00 and ColecoVision at about \$149.00. The more expensive system at the time was Nintendo at \$249.00. Some of the games available at the time were Pac-Man, Donkey Kong and Galaxian. Besides the electronic cash registers and the other electronic items in the store, this was my only access to computer technology.

Because potential electronic literacy "otherness" was all around her, she was fortunate to become involved with it and gain the confidence that she could learn and keep learning such literacies:

Working in the electronics department was always fun. When new items arrived not only did we have to assemble them but also learn how to use them. By knowing how things worked enabled us to sell more products. This included the Sony Walkman, cameras, calculators and video game systems.

The exposures to these electronic literacies—Atari, ColecoVision, Nintendo, and cash registers—came when she was in her twenties during an early period of electronic gaming, and as she noted, these were all experiences she could not afford to purchase on her own. It is important to note that while Laura did not have any schooling beyond high school at this time, her experience as an electronics salesperson exposed her to a variety of electronic literacies that have developed significantly since the 1980s. This



acclimation to technology allowed her to move into her next position, both technically and psychologically.

Laura's next job was as an apartment complex manager. Here she was exposed to other types of electronic literacies. Her former experiences and new electronic literacies gave her the skills to obtain this position and advance within it. Her new employer served as her direct sponsor, yet the position allows us another glimpse at something that a concept like technology gateway does not capture. Many of these positions require of participants some level of, first and foremost, traditional literacies in order to learn electronic literacies and perform their jobs. Cubbyhole gateways are reflective of this class of job and duties they require because they are often hidden and undervalued, yet they are significant sites where people learn to apply transitional electronic literacies. Electronic cubbyhole jobs also are a seeming world apart from manual labor jobs requiring little to no technology skills or the opportunity to learn them.

Cubbyhole gateway jobs create opportunities for workers to show an interest in learning and handling more and more electronic literacy responsibilities.

Schuster explained her experience at the time:

[B]y this time, I was introduced to computers at work in the apartment industry. One was not expected to be technologically literate at this time to be hired in the industry. Since computers were new to apartment complex offices, the only thing they were used for at the time was for accounts payable.

In 1993, the computers in the apartment industry now had software called Rent Roll [installed]. We could now post payments on the computer and generate maintenance requests and a myriad of financial reports. If there were any other programs on the computer we didn't know about them.

We still did not have access to the Internet or any other software; these computers were strictly for business purposes.

Her reflection here indicated that an apartment manager today would need to enter such a position with many of the skills she picked up and then practiced on the job. Moreover, from her last statement above and from talking with her, she believes that



many of the technological literacies also pose a threat to business productivity. She felt much time is lost by employees who surf the Web and read and write non-work related emails. Her workplace, additionally, kept her busy, and she self-sponsored other forms of technology to increase workplace output:

By 1995, we discovered ClipArt but had to learn to use it on our own. This was done by trial and error . . . and took a long time. We were then expected to make our flyers advertising the apartment community. By 1997, there was software for the apartment forms—applications, leases, addendums PLUS we were able to print them off of our computer—NO MORE TYPEWRITERS!!!!

Nonetheless, her new workplace served as a powerful cubbyhole gateway, allowing her access to some of the electronic literacies necessary to succeed in an ever-demanding marketplace without having to attend any specialized studies.

Schuster's apartment complex cubbyhole gateway was not an ideal training scenario and stresses the important yet challenging role of electronic literacy self-sponsorship: "[A]nything I learned about computers and/or software I learned on my own or with help [from] the MIS⁸ department that happened to be next to my office (apartment). Throughout this time, training resources within the company were minimal." Embedded within this rich statement are two important concepts. First, she had a direct electronic literacy sponsor and technology gateway through proximity to the apartment complex's MIS department. A direct sponsor is someone who specializes in technology, often not the one sought or needed, but who nonetheless is "around" to guide, train, or simply help when needed. In Schuster's experience this was not a formal locale for employees to be trained, one offering classes and manuals. Second, she had to self-sponsor. Self-sponsorship, a significant variable in this research, is when a participant teaches herself a new electronic literacy. Alarming, with the advent of ever-changing electronic literacies, participants indicated they self-sponsored more often than not. The conclusion to *Generaciones* discusses the qualitative results of all survey participants, where self-sponsorship is a category.

Schuster, in turn, became a direct electronic literacy sponsor for her boss:

⁸ Management Information Systems.



At this time I also had to help (teach) my supervisor Cindy⁹ work her way around these programs. Sometimes it was opening an attached document, attaching a document on an email, or managing a form created on Excel. Usually she would get frustrated and I would have to do it for her.

Despite these workplace evolutions, Schuster also represented many individuals living outside of electronic literacies in her home, yet even this changed in 1999. Laura indicated that she had “computers at work, [so] we didn’t feel the need to have one at home. I’m not even sure we even thought of getting one at all, maybe because we only related computers with work.” As several of the transitional electronic literacy participants in the last chapter indicated, associating computers with work is commonplace,¹⁰ as opposed to a pastime, hobby, education, or the ways we loosely intertwine all these activities today.

Laura ended up receiving a computer for home in 1999 from her mother-in-law, who had purchased one for herself and decided “we needed one, so she had a Gateway computer shipped to us”:

We didn’t have a computer in our home until 1999. Me and my husband worked and had access to computers at our jobs. We never felt the need for one at home—maybe because we only associated computers with work. My mother-in-law sent us a Gateway computer that year—she had just gotten one and thought that we should have one too. We didn’t use it for much except to sometimes navigate the Web and occasional emails. (Image: Schuster’s Computer Workstation)



⁹ Pseudonym

¹⁰ In about 1986 I was visiting a friend in Chicago. He worked as an executive for IBM. I recall he had a laptop at home, a rare sight at that time for me. The whole time of my visit I noticed that he did not use the laptop and that it was dusty. I asked why. He told me that he put in long days at work, came home and worked even more. This was why he didn’t use his laptop. He too saw it associated with work.



The role of the indirect electronic literacy sponsor continues to serve an important function in the way technology is introduced into the home. In Schuster's case, her mother-in-law's purchase of a computer and her realization of the need for her son's family to have one in order to learn new electronic literacies are undeniable. Moreover, in the picture we see a common micro-literacy zone in the home: monitor, hard drive, speakers, keyboard, printer, cables everywhere, all on a "convenient" cart. The MTZ is, moreover, telling of private, or semiprivate, places where electronic literacy practitioners learn and create on their own.

In a brief period of time the technology in her home took off, becoming a vibrant gateway, though she still felt behind:

Like everyone else, throughout the years I've become exposed to the new technologies from the VCR to DVD players, video cameras and digital cameras. We now have two computers at home; our sons use the Gateway computer for their programs such as JumpStart, Disney Art, and The Learning Company. Up until now, obtaining some of the new technologies wasn't urgent or needed. I'm amazed when I do learn of some of the new things that come out but I don't rush out and obtain them. However, the flash drive amazes me and I just had to have one.¹¹

Her preoccupation of always feeling technologically several steps behind is a feeling many of this *generación* share. Schuster's experience of already being an adult while quick-evolving electronic literacies came into existence is an effect some of the younger *generaciones* in later chapters do not seem to feel. Schuster's need and view of electronic literacies significantly shifted compared to the ways that technology worked its way into her earlier life in the workplace: "When I returned to school in fall 2002, I started using the computer more. I mainly used it for email, school registration, Web navigation and occasional online purchases. This year I have used a computer for my digital pictures, and Web conferences in a humanities class." The shift in how she is now required to use computers and technology is evident.

¹¹ Shuster had to purchase a flash drive for her class with me in 2005. At first she didn't want to spend the money on it, which at that time was about \$25.00.



Señora Irma Mohammadi lived in Juárez until she was eighteen years old with her parents, moving to El Paso in 1980 in order to go to UTEP. While Schuster spent the first three years of her life in Juárez, too young to attend school there, *Señora Mohammadi* did all of her elementary and secondary schooling in Juárez. What difference, if any, would this make in her acquisition of traditional literacies and literacies of technology? Irma grew up in an economically comfortable home of white brick with three bedrooms and a medium-sized yard. She remembered one family tradition well, one that rings of hard work yet family

togetherness, capped by relaxation: “We used to clean the whole house on Saturdays. We change the curtains, linens and wax the floors. In the afternoons we will sit outside and we will play the guitar and sing.” (Activate video above left for Irma’s expanded commentary). At home she read magazines such as Time, Newsweek, and Reader’s Digest as well as the Koran and poetry by Pablo Neruda; she also wrote for schoolwork and letters to friends. Her parents often stressed that education was, “The key to success . . . the most important thing in your life.” At home traditional literacy skills were practiced and encouraged, as she saw her family regularly reading and writing letters. In elementary school Irma especially enjoyed composing poems, essays, and speeches. Her family’s encouragement and support for reading continued and her parents frequently bought books for her. Later in secondary school she continued to write in a journal about the experiences in her life. (Activate video to right for Irma’s expanded commentary).

2000 was a transitional year. Irma first came into contact with a computer at a friend’s home, and that same year she started school





Generaciones' Narratives

at UTEP, where she had more exposure to technology and demands on her to learn it. (Activate video to right for Irma's expanded commentary). She decided she needed to buy a computer, which cost \$600.00, for her schoolwork. In the years since returning to school and buying a first computer, her learning of electronic literacies has taken off. She has had several direct sponsors, who have helped her in various settings. For email and multimedia a friend at school took the time to teach her. Here it is important to



note the public gateway was a university, yet the direct sponsor was a fellow student. (Activate video to left for Irma's expanded commentary).

The results of the overall survey data for this research, discussed in the conclusion, indicate that students learned electronic literacies first by self-sponsorship, second by friends, and last by other people working in the labs. Teachers do not surface in her

commentary, and her experience is validated by the overall quantitative results in the conclusion to *Generaciones*. The explosion of self-sponsorship has begun.

At home, one of her children taught her how to download music and software. Unlike traditional literacy learning, which is typically learned both at school and at home from parents and older relatives, her direct sponsor was one of her children. Like the *generación* from 1920-1950, Irma's *generación* finds itself coming into technological literacy through a younger *generación*, especially through their children.



El Paso Born and Raised

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Migration 1</u>	<u>Current Residence</u>
<i>Mary Graboski</i>	1955	El Paso, TX	Georgia	El Paso, TX
<i>Laura Maria Dominguez</i>	1952	El Paso, TX		El Paso, TX

Mary Graboski and Laura Maria Dominguez were both born in El Paso and live here today. As a child Mary's family moved to Georgia for several years, while Laura Maria's path kept her in El Paso her entire life. This section explores their paths and experiences in literacy learning to see what similarities and differences place might make, if any, in these two participants' lives.

Señora Mary Graboski was born in 1955 and is the daughter of Mexican immigrants who moved to El Paso at the time of her birth. Shortly thereafter, her parents moved the family to Georgia. Her parents' views on Mexico were negative, focusing primarily on economics: "Mexico had no opportunities. We moved to U.S. so we kids had better education, medicine, opportunities. They did not like Mexico." Mary's memories growing up at home were of a family reading the types of commonly passed around materials I have mentioned, such as newspapers and the Bible. Moreover, when she was still young, her parents "read Mexican folktales and stories to her."

In 1995, at age forty, Mary had her first direct contact with computers at a school in El Paso where she is a teacher: "The school required us to use computers," and it served as a gateway that trained her with a direct sponsor. Her close contact with a direct sponsor who taught her to both use computers and to teach with them opened up her willingness to explore and embrace literacies of technology in her classroom. It also opened her interest to use a computer for personal use.

In 2005 Mary bought a \$1,000.00 home computer. The Graboski family's home use of computers marks an important transition. Though Mary was taught to use computers in the workplace, the family first used its computer for more social activities, but now uses it for both social and all sorts of work-related needs. Mary indicated that the family used the computer "just for fun and learning at first. Now for all things, banking, employment, email, research." Once the computer was in the home, Mary's daughter quickly latched



onto it for her work and social uses. As importantly, her daughter became an important direct sponsor, teaching Mary at home how to work with the Web and to design and print documents.

Señora Laura Maria Dominguez was born in El Paso in 1952 and has lived here her entire life. She serves as an assistant district director of a corporation in El Paso. Her family was poor growing up, but extremely hard hit financially for four years: “For a period of four years, when my mother was very ill and she and my father separated, we had very little money. Other than those four years, we were comfortable.” However, she also had to become the adult in the family at a young age:

Being one of the oldest, I had to grow up quickly and take care of mother while she was in a hospital bed and then in a wheelchair. I also had to care for my brothers and sisters until my mother got better. This was over a period of four to five years. My mother was not expected to live, but she gave herself the strength to survive. They also said she would never walk and she worked and worked on walking until she did walk.

Despite being born in the U.S. and having parents who speak English, Laura’s first language is Spanish. This is another bicultural and bilingual pattern educators need to be aware of. Despite what we may assume, some of our students may not have the initial English skills we anticipate, even if their parents speak it well:

I learned my alphabet when I was four and learned to read and write when I went to first grade. There was no kindergarten when I went to school. My father and mother both worked before I went to school and during the time I was in grade school. Since maids from Mexico were caring for us while my parents were at work, I spoke a lot of Spanish and did not speak English, although my parents did speak English.¹² Both were born in the United States. When my brother, who is one year older than me, and I started school, we did not know how to speak English. At that time, you were punished if you did not speak English in school.

¹² This type of experience is parodied in the film “Fun with Dick and Jane.”



Her grandmother worked to help her at this time, and her parents were interested in how Laura did in school:

My grandmother knew only a little bit of English, but she was the one that taught me how to write my alphabet when I was three and four. She thought it was important to learn to read and write. My mother and father thought it was very important that we attend school and pay attention in class. My father always knew when it was time for receipt of report cards. He always checked our grades and took an interest in how we were doing in school.

The challenges on the border of not speaking English in school are perhaps worse than further away. Laura shared the tragic results of not knowing English in school in El Paso at that time. It creates another manifestation of a negative micro-tear zone, this time caused by a peer in class who sabotaged her assignment. The result of a peer's negative actions, especially because Laura could not explain herself and ended up as the one who suffered the consequences, are illustrated in this quote:

I remember I went to the reading circle and when I returned to my desk, the paper that I had completed and colored was not on my desk. The boy who sat next to me immediately showed me a paper he had in his hands and told me, "This is not yours, it is mine. See, everything is colored in black." I noticed he had colored over everything in black and that it was my paper. I got it from him and scratched over one of the characters that was colored over in black and sure enough, you could see the other colors below it. He grabbed it from me to turn it in to the teacher, who was picking them up. I bopped him on the head because I could not explain to the teacher what he had done. I was placed in the corner for an hour.

The negative experiences caused by her poor English skills continued in school, but Laura overcame the odds and excelled:

The first six weeks I received an "F" in reading and writing. The following six weeks I had the highest grade, a "G." I learned to read and write English in a hurry and have always liked to read and write. I did not go to college; however, throughout my years in school, first grade through high school graduation, I was



an honor student and always received the highest marks in English, reading, writing, and spelling.

She became an honors student and graduated from high school, yet for economic reasons she was unable ever to continue her passion for learning at the college level.

The results of first learning Spanish and going to school were negative for her. Later, she learned only English and forgot Spanish, which came back as a negative consequence when she later took a formal Spanish class:

I had a Spanish course around fourth or fifth grade and learned to read and write Spanish. However, my Spanish is not the correct Spanish, but more of the Tex-Mex Spanish that is spoken along the border. This is what is often referred to as Spanglish.

This micro-tear zone affected her view toward language and learning. Here on the border speaking Spanglish is okay only if one is among those with similar Spanglish abilities. These speakers do not speak Spanglish with other Spanish speakers from Mexico, usually for fear of ridicule. By this time she already believed that “her” Spanish was inferior to “other” forms of Spanish, and this included her parents’ Spanish as well, since they were born and raised in the United States, attended school in El Paso, and learned to read and write English while in school. She told me that, “Although they spoke Spanish, it was more the ‘border’ Spanish and they did very little writing in Spanish.” Her shame of her border Spanish was also experienced by her parents and most likely transmitted to her.

Laura was one of the lucky ones when she was young. Because of overcrowding, she was transferred to another school, which, according to her recollection, changed her entire outlook on schooling:

The first teacher I had in first grade had too many students in the class and it was difficult for her to teach the students, especially those that needed more teaching in English. As I previously stated, maids from Mexico took care of me while my parents worked and they spoke Spanish to me, so I spoke very little English



when I started school. As soon as I was transferred to another teacher and class three weeks after I started school, I immediately picked up the English language. The teacher in the class did not speak Spanish, but she was an excellent instructor and within a few weeks I was speaking English fluently. I also started receiving very good grades.

Not all students, as educators will recognize and are aware of, are as fortunate as Laura was. Many students end up falling through the cracks through school missteps, lack of family support, or low self-esteem. In this instance, Laura's negative MTZ became a positive one when her teacher worked with her to overcome it. Educators who work with foreign and even American-born students need more of this awareness and ability to work with students who have been in and through such negative micro-tear zones.

Outside of school Laura had several alternative literacy opportunities. The Clardy Fox Library in El Paso served as a frequent traditional public literacy gateway. Since the library was close by, eight to ten blocks from her house, she became an active member and used the library extensively: "I checked out books every week. I also used it as a source for reports I had to write. I would spend time at the library conducting research and writing my reports." Libraries are a sanctuary for traditional literacy growth, yet as a source for mainstream literacy measures they remain invisible.

Less traditionally, she was active as a reader and writer at home:

I would write short stories and read them to my brothers and sisters. These were meant to entertain them. I did not keep copies of these. For example, I wrote a short story about a dog that was playing with his reflection in a pool of water and another about a chicken who cared for some kittens. I also wrote letters to my cousins, friends that left El Paso, and a pen pal I used to have.

Because of her love of reading and writing, she "sometimes thought about writing short stories for children."

Middle school did not mark much of a shift for Laura, but one shift she recalled was that "we wrote more stories and many times were required to read these in front of the class." The fragile beginning Laura had in the public school system had changed



tremendously, from the time she entered school as an ESL learner to being a successful and talented student. Laura loved the school environment:

I many times stayed after school to participate in meetings of the clubs I was in. I also did the majority of my homework at school. I would go to the library and do as much of my homework, usually all, while I was still at school. . . . I always checked out books from the library and when I went to bed, before going to sleep, I would read these for enjoyment. . . . I then immediately went home and assisted my mother in caring for my brothers and sisters, as this was during the time my mother was very ill.

Amazingly she became the president, vice-president, and secretary of the National Honor Society during her middle school years and recalled speaking at induction ceremonies in front of members, teachers, and parents.

The reach of gateways on this family is wide and the effect on her brothers and sisters has been dramatic. Moreover, the synthesis of computers as a tool for work and social activities appear to have bloomed with her:

My brothers and sisters all use computers at their job sites. All of them also have a home computer. One of my sisters works from home. Therefore, computers are very important to all of them. They have children and/or grandchildren that also use the computer to do their schoolwork. They look up information for themselves in the Internet and make purchases through the computer.

Likewise, she told me similarly aged cousins are all employed at businesses where they use computers:

Some have their own businesses and also have computers for running their businesses. The majority of them have a home computer. Their children also use the computer to do their schoolwork.

Clearly, in her words the younger *generaciones* are more and more exposed and immersed into an array of literacies.



The following long quote highlights the role that typing had in landing her first job at sixteen with the Federal Aviation Administration in 1969. It was here she saw air traffic controllers using computers. In 1970, after graduation, she began work with the Immigration and Naturalization Services, where her local office received its first computer. By the mid-1980s more computers flooded the workplace and finally in 1993 she received her own work computer. As she described it, the computer “showed up” on her desk; she had no training for this computer and had to self-sponsor in order to use it. A few years later, her work sponsored some workshops to teach employees how to use some of the now popular software programs:

This was the old type of mainframe computer that was quite big. When I started working at the FAA Air Traffic Control Tower when I was sixteen, we used typewriters and did not really work on computers. The air traffic controllers, however, were already working with computers. After I graduated from high school in 1970, I started working with the Immigration and Naturalization Services. We were still using typewriters at that time. I remember it was in the mid-1980s when we started getting computers at work. However, it was only one computer per branch. Little by little we started receiving more computers. In approximately 1993, I received my own computer, which was placed on my desk. I worked with it and learned to operate it on my own. I would read the manuals relating to the programs and was soon working with it. About two to three years later, we were provided with classes in [Microsoft] Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Word.

While she did not jump at the prospect of purchasing a computer for her home, she did in 2002, creating a first gateway that was “mostly used by my daughter for her college coursework. It is also used by the rest of the family for looking up information through the Internet, such as flights, items for purchase, sending messages, photos, etc.” The level of use and literacies is amazing. The family now uses the technology for everything from digital photo manipulation to reading and composing messages by email.

Laura Maria described in detail the purchase process for their first home computer. The purchase highlights another example of a joint technology purchase between two different *generaciones*:



I went with my daughter to purchase it. I knew she needed a computer for her schoolwork, especially since she was attending college. I felt bad that she had to go to the library and school all the time to do her schoolwork because she did not have a computer at home. This was the first computer we had purchased for use at home.

The computer cost about \$2100.00. We got a \$250 rebate. *This was a significant investment, but a good and necessary investment.* It is used every day by either my daughter, who is in college, my son or myself. In addition to using it for personal things, we also sometimes use it for projects related to our employment. (emphasis added)

Her practice of various electronic literacies is extensive when we consider this *generación*, but when we recall her passion for traditional literacies and her excelling in school, it is no wonder that she had the desire and ability to learn electronic literacies and succeed. "However," she indicated, "in the last two or three years we are required to have the Information Technology people review software and download it if it is needed for employee use." While the technology boom embraced just about any technological initiative, the Internet has slowed this somewhat in the workplace because of the increased risk of computer viruses and hacking. Obviously her workplace is a central gateway and sponsor for her evolving literacies, yet we must also recall that the workplace is serving as an economic motivator; that is, her growth is consistent with what the company deems is necessary.

Laura went on to reflect on the roles that family members play in younger *generaciones'* electronic literacies:

Parents are aware that computers are very important in their employment and businesses and that they are also very important for their children in their schoolwork. Almost all parents have purchased computers for their use and their children's use at home, for business and pleasure, to perform work at home, and for schoolwork.

Laura Maria's view is significant. Business work, homework, and entertainment are enmeshed in her vision of technology, unlike many of the earlier participants who

separated the places and uses of these new literacies. Computers are for work and if they are in the home, they are for more work. As a parent she recognizes the importance of creating gateways at home for her children. Two important issues have cropped up from such indirect sponsorship. First, educators and parents need to realize that students and children cannot be expected to always self-sponsor or be directly sponsored by friends. Second, Laura Maria overlooks the role that her own children have played in the direct sponsorship of literacies she has learned from them. Traditional literacy sponsorship, where the parents and teachers are in control, has shifted significantly with electronic literacies.

Conclusion

In light of the immigration issues facing the U.S. at this moment (2009) and Congress' readiness to vote on new measures and fences, these participants' stories, work ethics, and attempts to become educated are the flesh, blood, and spirit left unheard in reports and docudramas. These participants are the ones who came to the technology boom of the 1980s as older, experienced workplace employees, with children of their own.

Many in this *generación* found themselves in workplaces that served as cubbyhole gateways where they typically started with no electronic literacies, but they importantly learned and practiced minimal electronic literacies that gave them the skills and confidence to seek more workplace and school challenges. Many workers throughout the U.S. from this *generación* also were trained more in light of an economic motivation than for technological literacy's sake.

Another revelation that came from the survey and interviews in this chapter is that many seemed to agree that buying a computer was financially easy. Two possible reasons to explain this came from my conversations with participants. The younger *generaciones*, whose parents purchased computers for their children, in most cases said that the purchase did not affect the family budget because the computer companies have easy payment and loan plans. My assumption is that the younger *generaciones* who were not actually paying for the technology did not realize the strain an additional monthly payment over several years might have. Often, it seems, as I observed with Chapter



One's *Generación*, the individuals at this age buy a computer because they need it in order to learn new electronic literacy skills for finding or advancing in the job market. At other times, some, if they can afford a computer and Internet access, use a computer for keeping in touch with friends and family by email. It has become a replacement for hard copy letter writing and an alternative for the telephone in many cases.

On the private and personal levels, participants have to self-sponsor electronic literacies, which is not the case with the traditional literacies of reading and writing. Historically and socially, this marks a significant shift. While in the past individuals were directly sponsored by others to read and write, with electronic literacies participants overwhelmingly self-sponsor. (See conclusion to *Generaciones* for complete data)

In this chapter we observed several instances of positive and negative MTZs, which are often subtle and privately held experiences. For teachers, I believe it is important that we are encouraging awareness of these moments and the power that they have, fostering positive MTZ experiences through constructive feedback and additional help, and keeping the negative MTZs to a minimum by not overreacting to students' current shortcomings. Employers need to follow the same rule of thumb when so much is at stake. Last, students need to be aware of how MTZs affect them, so that they can learn to work through them when they occur, and to be better at instilling positive MTZs among their peers.