Generaciones' Narratives

SECTION	Introduction
TITLE	The Pursuit and Practice of Traditional and Electronic Literacies on the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands
AUTHOR	John Scenters-Zapico
OVERVIEW	*Generaciones* shares traditional and electronic literacy practices as revealed by participants from Mexico and the U.S. From these stories, *Generaciones* debunks the myth that the border is illiterate by challenging mainstream views of literacy and offers a range of alternative practices. Second, *Generaciones* looks at how these bilingual participants practice electronic literacies in two nations, two school systems, and varying economic scales. Third, *Generaciones* explores where participants were able to practice literacies (the gateways); who may have helped them (sponsors); and how they practiced traditional and electronic literacies. Fourth, *Generaciones* offers readers firsthand alternative views that challenge stereotypes about the border and Latino/as, and reveals how they have practiced traditional and electronic literacies since 1920. Fifth, although these border literacies are unique and although my method arises from the cultural conditions driving literacy acquisition and practices, *Generaciones* develops a methodology whose explanatory power makes it a model for literacy studies in other cultural niches. *Generaciones* explores and discusses literacy practices from 1920 to 1985 on the U.S.-Mexico border, specifically El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Chihuahua. These literacy practices are further complicated by participants who move back and forth across the border while speaking English, Spanish, and Spanglish.
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PRESS URL	http://ccdigitalpress.org
BOOK URL	http://ccdigitalpress.org/generaciones

Computers and Composition Digital Press
AN IMPRINT OF UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Introduction: The Pursuit and Practice of Traditional and Electronic Literacies on the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

John Scenters-Zapico

In the following pages, *Generaciones* shares traditional and electronic literacy practices as revealed by participants from Mexico and the U.S. From these stories, *Generaciones* debunks the myth that the border is illiterate by challenging mainstream views of literacy and offers a range of alternative practices. Second, *Generaciones* looks at how these bilingual participants practice electronic literacies in two nations, two school systems, and varying economic scales. Third, *Generaciones* explores where participants were able to practice literacies (the gateways); who may have helped them (sponsors); and how they practiced traditional and electronic literacies. Fourth, *Generaciones* offers readers firsthand alternative views that challenge stereotypes about the border and Latino/as, and reveals how they have practiced traditional and electronic literacies since 1920. Throughout I challenge stereotypical definitions of literacy and literacy learning and extant methods for literacy studies. Fifth, although these border literacies are unique and although my method arises from the cultural conditions driving literacy acquisition and practices, *Generaciones* develops a methodology whose explanatory power makes it a model for literacy studies in other cultural niches. *Generaciones* explores and discusses literacy practices from 1920 to 1985 on the U.S.-Mexico border, specifically El Paso, Texas, and Juárez, Chihuahua. These literacy practices are further complicated by participants who move back and forth across the border[1] while speaking English, Spanish, and Spanglish.[2] While

[1] As the participants in *Generaciones* move across all sorts of borders, not just the physical, legal ones, I have chosen to rhetorically place all video interviews off of traditional borders and margins, mixing the videos into normal textual margins and into traditionally off-limit border markers. My goal is to show that occupying such spaces at the same time effectively serves to bring together multiple ideas and elements.

[2] Ilan Stavans' Spanglish is a great examination of the role Spanglish occupies in the U.S. He says, "Spanglish is often described as the trap, la trampa, Hispanics fall into on the road to assimilation—el obstàculo en el camino" (3). Spanglish has also been called "casteyanqui, inglañol, argot sajòn, español bastardo, Papiamento gringo, and calò pachuco" (4). Throughout the book Stavans develops his own definition of Spanglish: "The verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations" (5). Also see Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera, especially Chapter 5, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." Also see Guillermo Gómez-Peña's Dangerous Border Crossers: The Artist Talks Back and The New World Border: Prophesies, Poems & Loqueras for the End of the Century for poetic-visual-narrative celebrations

Latino/a border literacies are unique, they are relevant to the entire border and Latino/a population in the U.S.

Literacy has long been correlated to economic success. In 2003 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released a report highlighting the results of its recent survey of adult English literacy. This report noted that the average scores of those not finishing high school were in the "Below Basic" category, while 41 percent of adults with a graduate school education scored "Proficient." The study further indicated that the "high school push outs"[3] who scored "Below Basic" earned $432 per week, and those who scored "Proficient" averaged $975 per week. The difference of $543 dollars per week—or a whopping $26,064 per year—stresses that literacy equals economics[4] (Schneider).

The logic, however, that literacy is the only reason some earn more than others has long been held suspect by many literacy scholars. An abundance of ways to talk about, complain about, and finally characterize literacies exists in several fields. In Stuckey's The Violence of Literacy she positions herself precisely in the experience I found myself in with this project: literacy is not a unified "thing"; it is of course unified for those who want to flaunt statistics of ostensible literacy. Stuckey sees violence done to those who do not possess traditionally accepted literacy. Similarly, Bourdieu views literacy as "symbolic violence" between the dominant and the dominated classes. A dominant class, he argues, uses real and symbolic capital to carry out symbolic violence, or advantage, which helps to maintain its dominance (Bourdieu and Passeron 5). Thus, people who do not dominate traditional literacy measures are forced into lower economic positions in the societal pecking order of money-power.

Brandt teases out the economic reasoning as it is viewed from a moral imperative:

> Literacy as a cultural mandate is now taught and learned in terms of school success and economic viability. Its justifications reside in its value as a mental and scribal asset—a production asset upon which a healthy economy and American world dominance increasingly rely. Today, illiteracy marks you as a moral outcast not because you have resisted conformity to social mores but

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of Latino/a language and culture. Much of Gómez-Peña's work is performed live and encourages audience interaction and interruption.

[3] A term now used to indicate that many students are not dropouts from our school systems, but are literally pushed out for social, educational, and cultural reasons (Wolff).

[4] "Measuring literacy is a complicated task. One challenge is that we are testing adults, and you don't find them gathered in classrooms. Another challenge is that there are different types of literacy to measure. Yet another challenge is determining what it means to be literate. The report I am releasing today addresses these challenges and gives us solid data on the state of adult literacy in America" (Schneider 1).

> because you are a drag on economic productivity—unable to pull your weight as a learner and an earner. ("Drafting" 488)

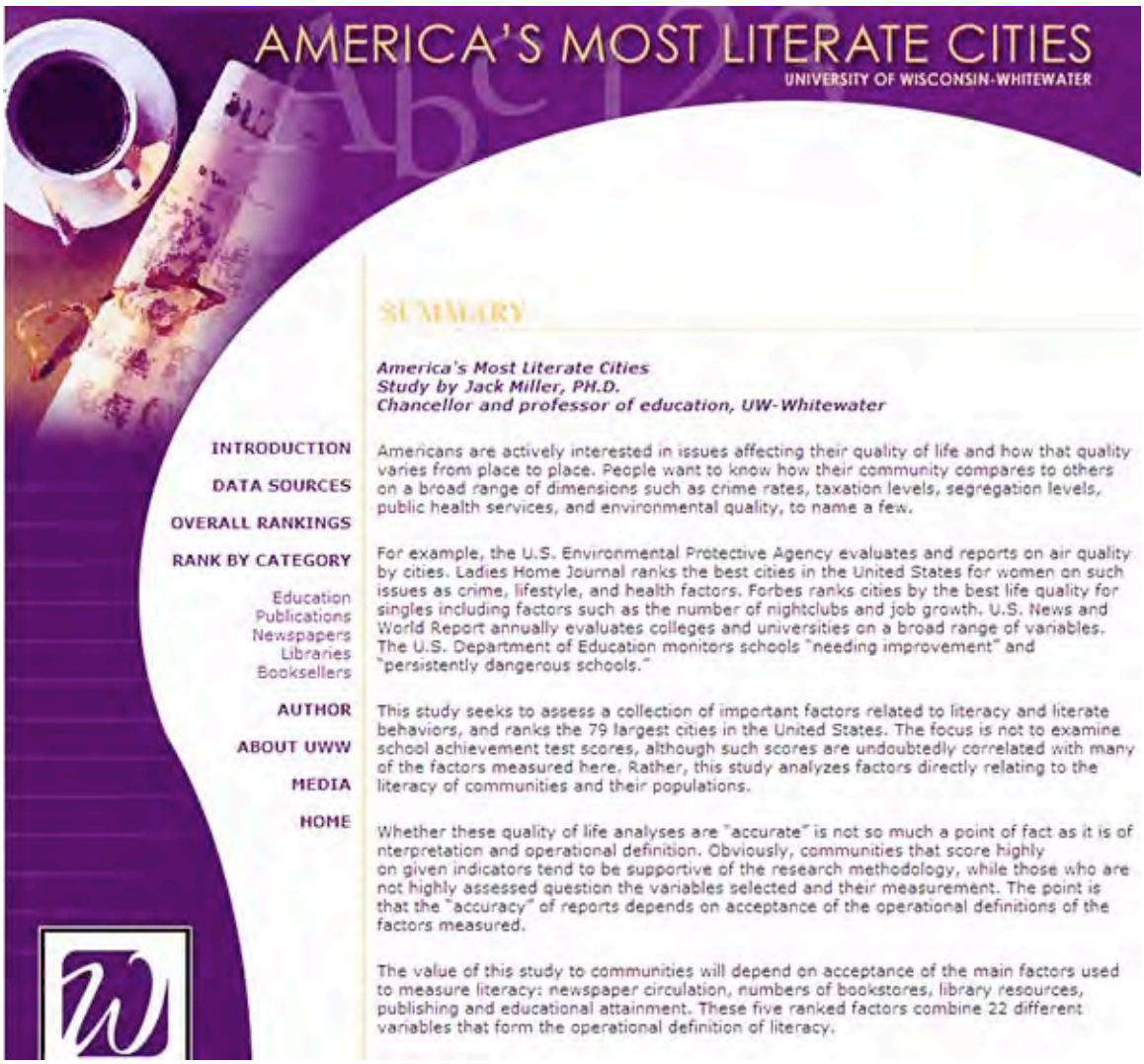
Being labeled literate or illiterate has very real consequences. Lankshear and Knobel note that words like "literacy" and "illiteracy" tend to have sociological connotations as opposed to "reading," which is viewed as psychological: "For example, 'illiteracy' and 'illiterate' usually carried social class or social group connotations. Being illiterate tended to be associated with being poor, being of marginal status and so on" (New Literacies 8). Their observations, if we rely on the NCES literacy and poverty statistics, are quite accurate regarding the ways illiteracy works in our nation.
In the El Paso Times, the primary newspaper read in the U.S.-Mexico border city of El Paso, Texas, head librarian Carol Brey-Casiano recently exclaimed:

> Literacy pays!
> The message sent by the NCES and reiterated by the El Paso Public Library is that we must continue to focus attention on this national dilemma and work together to fix it. (7B)

The argument goes that if literacy is low, salaries are low. "Fix" literacy and salaries will go up, right? Line up to learn, and then earn! Dilemma solved. However, Brandt further indicates that

> Politically speaking, the moral imperative was linked closely to hierarchies of class and race. People who were excluded from literacy were those subjected to second-class citizenship, people whose standing in so-called moral or civic society was not protected or nourished as a matter of law or custom. ("Drafting" 489)

Do El Pasoans follow Brey-Cassiano's lead and "fix" their literacy for a better standard of living, or do they accept second-class citizenship status? That is, are we really literate and just plain overlooked? Because the NCES supplies national data, I wondered exactly where and how other literacy researchers from outside our area would situate this multilingual, multi-literate, and multicultural border city. This data seemed significant because such claims inevitably affect how others perceive of a location, and how those of us who live here think of our place and ourselves.
I now set out to explore two local issues: El Paso's literacy rates and average salaries. Of course I knew that literacy would depend on the definitions of literacy that were used, but I also realized it is important to know how officials apply their standards to populations and areas they "objectively" know nothing about. The yearly Whitewater literacy study of the most and least literate cities in the U.S. receives a lot of attention:



(Miller)

These are certainly questionable factors. Does a place like Boston, with its greater number of printing and distribution centers, receive a superior rank as a result? Does New York, with its extensive distribution of the Times, get better scores because of the same variables? While both Boston and New York have high printing rates, most of those materials are shipped elsewhere. I fell quickly into the Whitewater literacy study's anticipated disagreement camp (they would not consider me an ally) when I saw where El Paso stood out of 79 cities:

Education: 75 out of 79 cities

Periodical Pubs: 69 out of 79 cities

Newspapers: 73 out of 79 cities

Libraries: 74 out of 79 cities

Based on these low literacy rates, I assumed we would be poor. In 2004 El Pasoans earned $15,630 yearly (this number is adjusted for inflation), while the national average was $24,020. Families below the poverty level in El Paso were at 24.0%, while nationally this figure was 10.1%. Other data about El Paso's poverty reveal that:

> In 2004, 29 percent of people were in poverty. Forty-one percent of related children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 18 percent of people 65 years old and over. Twenty-five percent of all families and 40 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level. ("El Paso City, Texas")

It has been proven: El Paso has low literacy and high poverty rates. This does not bode well for a border community like El Paso. The previously discussed Whitewater literacy study supports Victor Villanueva's argument about bootstrap mentality toward Latino/as: "People of color don't do better because they don't try harder, that most are content to feed off the State" ("Rhetoric of Racism" 651; see also his Bootstraps). The sad truth is that literacy studies that fail to acknowledge the multilingual and cultural dynamics of the U.S. place many populations into the position Villanueva describes.

However, ecological factors relevant to literacies of the Spanish, English, and Spanglish types complicate the local literacy data. El Paso's historical and present-day sister-city, Juárez, Mexico, is right across the river and connects us with six multilane vehicle and pedestrian bridges. To get from downtown El Paso to downtown Juárez only takes about five minutes of walking. Unfortunately, outside researchers do not know or consider our intertwined, intercultural history, nor do they realize the number of people who cross the bridges every day. Stand on one of the bridges and you see that El Pasoans coming from Juárez buy many things like magazines, newspapers, and books; similarly, Juárenses (people from Juárez) do the same in El Paso. It is an international admixture reflecting the love of Mexico and the U.S. A participant from Chapter 2 of *Generaciones*, Angelica

M., describes this seamlessness: "Basically El Paso was more a continuation of Juárez. It was the same thing." (Activate video above for Angelica M.'s expanded commentary).

These two cities are united by over five hundred years of history, of interchange, of marriage, on immigration both ways, by business and industry, and of course a river with two names: the Rio Grande/*Río Bravo*. Nevertheless, because of the current *Narcotraficante* wars, which have claimed over a thousand lives on this border alone, and the tightened security after 9-11, the movement across the border has significantly decreased.

El Paso's cultural ecology, then, must include Juárez, where the literacy index is high. The "Población de 15 años y más y porcentaje de alfabetismo por municipio, 2000, en Juárez era 97.3." The statistic indicated a sample of 764,633, which is significantly lower than Juárez's stated population of 3,052,907. Another source noted that the number of illiterates in Juárez was 39,472. This figure closely matches the 97.3% Juárez literacy statistic cited in a recent El Paso Times article, which included data from the 2005 American Community Survey and the Mexican National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Computing (INEGI). Nevertheless, if we stand on any of our bridges and observe the connectedness, we must situate Juàrez's literacy statistic into Whitewater's calculation. The literacy data would have to change. What would not change is the salary scale in El Paso or in Juárez, as this is based more on race, on the U.S.'s moral imperative, and on beliefs in the bootstrap mentality ("Tabulados Básicos").

With that 97.3% literacy statistic in mind, if we took a stroll across a bridge into Juárez, we would discover twenty-five libraries[5] and three newspapers: "Respecto a los periodicos de Ciudad Juárez existentes son El Diario de Juárez, El Mexicanole y El Norte de Juárez, *de los cuales tiene acceso a cada una de ellas virtualmente*" (Cervantes; emphasis added). All of this "literacy" data does not include Internet access to materials from the U.S. or Mexico, which is additionally abundant and calls into doubt statistics about any area. Data from across the river highlights the shortsightedness of literacy researchers like Whitewater who fail to consider location complexity and Internet resources.[6]

5 The data on libraries in Chihuahua State and patrons who use them adds to the puzzle of literacy on the border. Chihuahua state indicates the following data on libraries for 2003:

Place	Year	Number of Libraries	Number of Volumes
Chihuahua	2003	367	5,967

6 High-speed cables run under and over the Rio Grande. Some areas are wireless.

At the end of the day, when looking at what we might term ecological data, we discover the complexity of this international ecological system: the "hard" data shares numbers with us, questionable ones, but no understanding of where, how, and why participants learned to become traditionally and electronically literate. The array of contrasting numbers and figures sent me on an emotional mission, but it all made me understand that my motive in *Generaciones* was simple: I was tired of reading all the data saying nothing to me about who lives and learns here, and how they actually practice traditional and electronic literacies. I realized an important way to understand how participants practiced traditional and electronic literacies was to hear their stories firsthand, in their own words. While Brandt looked at how people pursued traditional literacy in the Midwest (Literacy in American Lives 9), my examination focuses on the stories of how and where the participants practice both traditional and electronic literacies on the U.S.-Mexico border.

The ensuing chapters bring to light the rich historical data that emerges from the accounts of everyday people living through social and political events. This information will help us better situate and understand the multilingual cultural ecologies that have shaped literacy experiences. Similar studies of literacy through social and cultural ecological lenses that guide this study and the information gathered have been conducted by Ronald Diebert (1997), Marilyn Cooper (1998), and Daniel White (1998). Following Diebert, who sees the "existing stock of social forces and ideas" (31) as significant to understanding literate pursuits and practices, this idea seems even more important on the border because it is different from mainstream America.
The same ecological factors and forces must include the advent of any new technologies and the literacies they necessitate. Bertram C. Bruce and Maureen P. Hogan (1998) outline an ecological model of electronic literacy that suggests most aspects of our lives are part of an ecological system, one interpenetrated by machines, humans, and our natural world. Consequently, literacy practices, including the technologies of literacy, "can only be understood in relation to larger systems of practice" (272; also see Cooper, "The Ecology of Writing"). The systems Bruce, Hogan, and Cooper advocate are further elaborated by Selfe and Hawisher. They see digital literacies as linked with economic factors, businesses and workplaces, sociocultural variables, and the myriad levels these influences need to become operative at the individual, family, local community, and national levels (Literate Lives 7; also see Hawisher, Selfe, Guo, and Liu, "Globalization and Agency").[7] Drawing on the social, cultural, and technological factors these researchers set forth in their studies, in this book I follow forty-three participants of literacy born from 1920-1985 and share their

[7] For similar accounts on the reciprocal dynamics among human and sociocultural-historical interactive dynamics, see Anthony Giddens (1979), Michel DeCerteau (1984), and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985).

stories of learning and developing traditional and electronic literacies through and around the U.S.-Mexico border.

Generaciones

The chapters of this study are arranged in a way that highlights the *generaciones*, a term I will use in Spanish throughout the book, in which the participants were born.[8] Some of the meanings of *generaciones* are varied; thus, here I briefly sketch how I am bilingually and biculturally using the concept to designate varying ranges of years and interconnections. The first chapter includes participants born between 1920 and 1950. This range fits the traditional thirty-year definition of *generación* offered in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED):

> The whole body of individuals born about the same period; also, the time covered by the lives of these. In reckoning historically by "generations", the word is taken to mean the interval of time between the birth of the parents and that of their children, usually computed at thirty years, or three generations to a century.

The definition leaves open the notion of generational overlap, making the grouping situation-based, not a rigid, historical thirty-year time span per each century. Another definition, again from the OED, tells us that *generación* can designate "a member of the first (or second, etc.) generation of a family, *spec.* of descendants of immigrant parents, esp. in the United States; also, designating a naturalized immigrant (or a child, etc., of a naturalized immigrant)." This second view captures the complexity I ran into in limiting the chapters by thirty-year *generaciones*. A *generación* essentially could be any age or age group, united by the fact that they are naturalized immigrants. Each chapter's participants are united to each other in that they are a first, second, or third *generación* descendant.

I next considered how the *Real Academia Española* characterized *generaciones*. The concept comes even closer to *Generaciones'* flexible application of the term *generación: "*Conjunto de personas que por haber nacido en fechas próximas y recibido educación e influjos culturales y sociales semejantes, se comportan de manera afín o comparable en algunos sentidos." Here we discover the close sociocultural and educational bonds of a *generación*, not imposed by age or family connections, but instead united by a

[8] In the process of surveying and interviewing participants, including those from my classes, I never asked their status of country of citizenship or immigration status. Seeking this information could pose unwanted legal and ethical issues. However, I believe most participants have naturalized family in both the U.S. and in Mexico, making naturalization a viable prospect for most of the participants in the research. For reference, each chapter does include a chart highlighting each participant's place of birth, any migrations they may have made, and their current place of residence.

nexus of time of birth, education, and social and cultural experiences ("Real Academia Española"). The implication becomes clear: *Generación* is based in both Anglo and Latin cultures, not so much on mathematical divisions of centuries, but more on relative social, historical, and cultural commonalities and connectedness.

I emphasize these diverse views of *generaciones* because they spotlight participants' lives according to the social, historical, economical, educational, and technological influences they have lived in. At the same time such groupings highlight the trans-generational and cultural connectivity among them. To determine the length and population of a *generación* became an attempt to apply these definitions in a way that was congruent with some of the meanings and with the population here. I also believe the groupings helped unite the social and cultural experiences of the participants in ways that were revealing of their lives and the timeliness of their ability to practice traditional and electronic literacies. For example, the first chapter covers participants born between 1920-1950 because this *generación* included the special experiences of a mother and daughter both born in this time frame. An amazing revelation from this chapter is how gender discrimination kept the mother from advancing in school, but she later made sure her daughter had the opportunities that she did not have. The daughter picked up several electronic literacies because of her job as a teacher. Similarly, because of the Vietnam War, Alberto Gonzalez was drafted; to avoid combat, he learned to work with computers. Chapters 2-4 cover nine years each; the participants in these chapters experience the introduction of technology and the demand to learn to use technologies in varying ways. The status of the economy and their age were important influences on how they were able to practice developing literacies. Chapter 5 is the last participant chapter and covers five years, 1981-1985; these individuals were born in the halcyon days of affordable desktop computers, when Apples blazed into home, work, and school settings.[9] This *generación* is intensely immersed in electronic literacies and is connected by its growth through the throes of significant pedagogical and social change. During the span of these five years, this *generación* experienced changes similar to those of the previous sixty-five years, yet they underwent significant changes that were incomprehensible during an earlier time. In 1986 on the border a

[9] Some truly significant events began in 1981 and climaxed in 1985: In 1981 Adam Osborne completed the first portable computer; it weighed 24 pounds and cost $1,795. Remarkably, the software on it was worth close to $1,500 ("Computer History Museum: Exhibits Timeline"). While the Macintosh was released in 1984, it did not sell well until 1985: "The Apple Macintosh debuts in 1984. It features a simple, graphical interface, uses the 8-MHz, 32-bit Motorola 68000 CPU, and has a built-in 9-inch B/W screen, but only seventy-four days after the introduction of the 'Macintosh', 50,000 units had been sold, *not that strong a show* . Apple refused to license the OS or the hardware, the 128k memory was not enough and a single floppy was difficult to use." (Bellis, emphasis added). Two other important events occurred in 1985: Microsoft Windows 1.0 ships in November 1985, and "the 'Macintosh' computer line received a big sales boost with the introduction of the LaserWriter printer and Aldus PageMaker; home desktop publishing was now possible" (Bellis).

gap emerged among educational pedagogies, haves, have maybes, and have nots.[10] These five chapters are within the parameters of *generación,* united by proximity of birth year; status as a first, second, third *generación* immigrant; and, more importantly, by the cultural and educational experiences they share.

Cultural and Ecological Considerations

The narratives in *Generaciones* draw equally from the "others"; that is, they look as much at the *generaciones* of Mexico as of the U.S. These *generaciones* are further interwoven by the personal stories of Latino/as[11] who live in the El Paso-Juárez borderlands, a multinational, multilingual area of over three million people. In El Paso [A]mong people at least five years old living in El Paso city in 2004, 77 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 97 percent spoke Spanish and 3 percent spoke some other language; 37 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well." ("El Paso City, Texas") No bilingual data like this exists from Mexican sources, but my estimate from living and teaching in border communities in Arizona and Texas for the last eighteen years is that about 15% of Juárez speaks and writes well in English, and about 30% speaks survival business English.

As a multilingual, multicultural border crosser I often find myself confused when considering exactly who the "others" are as they are presented on national news: We

[10] In another study underway I am researching and interviewing *generaciones* born between 1986-2001, and it is this group of individuals who show that from 1986 onward, education, especially of the electronic type, changed the face of the *generaciones* before them.

[11] On the surveys I conducted, interviewees used the category "Mexican" if they were born or lived in Mexico. If they were from El Paso, a few respondents used "Mexican-American." The majority used "Hispanic." I use "Latino/a." Arcelo Suárez-Orozco and Mariela Páez in Latinos: Remaking America (2002) argue that they prefer the term "Latino/a" because it is "generous" and "the term *Latino* is a new and ambiguous invention" (3) that captures all sorts of people and cultures. My own reasoning (and I've had many discussions about this, which means there is no one answer or fixed agreement) for using Latino/a is because the term is *not* ambiguous. Latino/a has a root that stands out, Latin. The Spanish language comes primarily from Latin, mixed with Arab, Greek, and other languages as well. Of course, we all know we are speaking of peoples who speak some form of Spanish, or perhaps none, but whose parents or upbringing in some way made them feel Latino/a. This could be in their preferred music, dress, food, etc. In this way Latino/a allows for racial and ethnic variety in the broadest ways. Speaking from a U.S. perspective, the term also embraces other speakers and cultures with a Latin root, such as Portuguese, French, and Italian. The U.S. Census Bureau uses Hispanic: "1/ Hispanic refers to people whose origin are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Hispanic/Latino, regardless of race." Gloria Anzaldúa, though she wavers, seems to favor "Chicano/a" in Borderlands/La Frontera in the chapter titled "La Conciencia de la Mestiza." Susan Romano ("Tlaltelolco: The Grammatical-Rhetorical *Indios* of Colonial Mexico") points out that "latino" in the New World meant "trilingual proficiency in Latin, Spanish, and at least one vernacular, such as Nahuatl, and which later would qualify the educated Tlaltelolco indio for co-authorship of bi- and tringual catechetical texts" (262).

are divided by passports and border guards for sure. As such, the stories I share in the pages you are about to immerse yourself in come in Englishes, Spanishes, and Spanglishes. When necessary I translate and interpret, something I and chapter co-authors Fernie Alañiz and Terry Quezada (Chapter 3) and Luciá Durá (Chapter 4) have been doing most our lives. I have kept the participants' language of choice in the body of *Generaciones* in their written or videotaped format and placed all translations, from Spanish to English, in pop-ups where they occur in text and in embedded pop-ups where they occur in the case of video. It is my aim to keep the nuances of many-voicedness and bilingualism, including my own, throughout the book.

Additionally, on this large urban border, some of us cross easily, some with difficulty, and sadly, some never make it. People like me legally cross in various ways. We pay twenty-five cents to enter Mexico and thirty cents to re-enter the U.S., and we carry an identification card, such as a driver's license, to show residency. If we look "white enough" and/or have unnoticeable accents, generally we do not need to show any verification of residency or citizenship. Or we may be asked, "Citizenship," and we reply "U.S." This usually suffices.[12] Another method for those who cross several times a day is with electronic "Fast Lane" permits on vehicles. This requires paying about $150, submitting official documents, and being interviewed by border authorities.[13] These Fast Lane permits allow people who cross the border frequently and quickly to take the kids to school, to get to meetings at the multinational maquilas, located both here and in Juárez, and to enter Mexico for many other reasons.

Still others go through more complicated border crossing ordeals. Some are poor but "fortunate," and successfully wade or swim across the Rio Grande/*Río Bravo* (newspaper article on left). Yet others, sadly, never make it across (newspaper article next page).

E.P. Time 5-29-05

Two men saved from drowning in canal

By Erica Molina Johnson
El Paso Times

Rescuers rushed to the Franklin Canal near Bowie High School early Sunday morning and pulled two men to safety who became trapped in the waters as they tried crossing from Mexico into the United States.

"This incident could easily have been tragic, but because of the great work done by the El Paso Fire Department's Water Rescue and Border Patrol they saved two people from drowning," Fire Department spokesman Lt. Mario Hernandez said.

Hernandez said that at 3:08 a.m. Sunday, Border Patrol officials requested help in getting two men out of the canal at 58 E. César Chávez Highway.

He said three men had planned to cross the canal, but only two entered the water.

"The two trapped in the water were caught off-guard by the strong and swift water current," Hernandez said.

The men — who were not identified — were pulled from the water at 3:19 a.m. One suffered from hypothermia as well as a cough from swallowing too much water.

Both men were treated at the scene and did not want to be transported to Thomason Hospital. Hernandez said they were then turned over to the Border Patrol. He said incidents such as this often increase during the summer months.

"The water looks very deceiving," Hernandez said. "These people found out the hard way when they jumped in and found that the water currents were very strong."

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In these pages you will read stories about how participants cross physical, psychological, social, digital, and educational borders in order to practice literacies. By listening to the stories of these *generaciones*, their quickly disappearing experiences are documented.

[12] In November 2005 my friend, Victor Villanueva, was visiting, and we went to Juárez, crossing by foot on the Santa Fe Street Bridge. On our way back, we both noticed we were being watched by the border guards more than others. I was not carded. Victor was.

[13] See "Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection" for more detailed requirements.

Approaching Traditional, Electronic, and Bilingual Literacies

Two useful concepts for considering traditional and electronic literacies situated in their sociohistorical and geographic place is with Lankshear's and Knobel's overarching model in which they draw out two powerful approaches to studying literacy. First, *Generaciones* is enriched by the paradigmatic because it stresses "a specific sociocultural approach to understanding and researching literacy," and second, by emphasizing the paradigmatic, psychological views are not employed (Lankshear and Knobel 16). *Generaciones* looks at individuals who, over the last eight decades, have sought and practiced literacies in unique ways, such as with their bilingualism and biculturalism. While *Generaciones* does not stress psychology, it does consider the positive and negative effects participants have indicated that others have caused to them.

Borderland

El Paso Times Saturday, April 1, 2006

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elpasotimes.com
ONLINE EXTRA:
Daily news updates

BORDERNEWS

Body found in canal by Downtown bridge

A man's body was found floating in a canal Downtown near the Paso del Norte Bridge shortly before 5 p.m. Friday, an El Paso police spokesman said.

There were no signs of foul play. It is thought the man was trying to cross the border illegally, police said. The El Paso Fire Department pulled the body from the water near Park Road, downstream from the international bridges Downtown. An investigation continues.

Daniel Borunda

Once immersed in the social, historical, and economical aspects of a place, the ontological approach helps to cast light on how individuals in specific, localized economies create, evolve, and practice literacies in times of rapid technological change. In Lankshear's and Knobel's words, "ontological"

> refers to the idea that changes have occurred in the character and substance of literacies associated with changes in technology, institutions, media, the economy, and the rapid movement toward global scale in manufacture, finance, communications and so on. Many of these new and changing social practices involve new and changing ways of producing, distributing, exchanging and receiving texts by electronic means. These have generated new multimodal forms of texts that can arrive via digital code—what Richard Lanham (1994) calls "the rich signal"—as sound, text, images, video, animations and any combination of these. (16)

The authors describe these "rich signal" categories of literacy as "post-typographic" forms of textual practice. *Generaciones* paradigmatically and ontologically explores and

characterizes how participants of literacy—on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and in their own stories—have become traditionally and electronically literate in specific places and times.

Because of the location of this study—on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands with the largest multilingual, urban city in the United States on the U.S. side—it is essential that this research ontologically consider multiple literacies and dynamic and evolving cultures. Further shedding light on the ontological is Gee's concept of "powerful literacies," an individual's ability to control secondary languages and to use the right language in the right ways at the right times within discourse communities. The first three powerful literacies in El Paso and Juàrez are Spanish, English, and Spanglish. Spanglish is a combination of Englishes and Spanishes, a hybrid that exists in different forms on the varying stretches of the U.S.-Mexico border, primarily on the U.S. side where more first- through fourth- *generación* participants reside and are exposed to both languages in myriad ways.[14] As a result, they learn and use select vocabulary and expressions that combine both languages. Moving languages into their social and cultural context, Gee, Hull, and Lankshear stress that we must think of literacy as integrated into social, institutional, and cultural interactions. A fourth necessary discussion is an ontological consideration of electronic literacies. I lead with Selfe and Hawisher's description of what electronic literacy means:

> By *technological literacy*, or *literacies*, we mean the practices involved in reading, writing, and exchanging information in online environments, as well as the values associated with such practices—cultural, social, political, and educational. For us, the term differs from computer literacy in that it focuses primarily on the word *literacy*—thus, on communication skills and values rather than on the skills required to use a computer. To distinguish technological literacy from computer literacy, literacy scholars have also used the related terms electronic literacy (Selfe & Hawisher, 2002; Sullivan & Dautermann, 1996); digital literacy (Tyner); and the literacies of technology (Hawisher & Selfe). We use the last term, literacies of technology, as an all encompassing phrase to connect social practices, people, technology, values, and literate activity, which, in turn, are

[14] In the PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition at UTEP, I have argued that Spanglish should be one of the languages our students can use for their "foreign" language requirement.

> embedded in a larger cultural ecology. . . . In all cases, the focus is on literacy practices and values inonline environments rather than on the skills required to use computers themselves (Literate Lives). (Activate video above for Selfe and Hawisher's expanded commentary electronic literacies).

This is a rich and powerful discussion that reveals the underlying social, political, and economic value of technological literacy

Another issue further complicates conversations about literacy and needs discussion. This specific section of the U.S.-Mexico border, as discussed earlier, is considered to have one of the lowest literacy rates in the nation. In part, these measurements are based on variables that do not consider more complex and situated notions of literacy (Lankshear and Knobel; Gee). This border is unique—as the chapters showcase—in that many individuals arrive here literate in Spanish or grow up in homes where Spanish was spoken and read. As a result, they are considered illiterate in English, but this determination is based on measures that do not test their real-world English, Spanish or Spanglish literacies. For example, the Whitewater literacy study considers English variables only from El Paso, but not the number of libraries, bookstores, and newspapers in Juàrez, or the number of Spanish reading materials that cross the border daily. In the chapters we also find that many participants have a variety of alternative reading materials around the home, most notably the Bible, magazines, and comics, and that they or a family member regularly read these. Even if these reading materials were used for mainstream literacy statistics, because most are passed down from family member to family member (like the Bible) or among friends (magazines and comics), they would not be counted because they are passed along and not purchased new or with yearly subscriptions.

Border Crossing Patterns

Lankshear and Knobel's paradigmatic model stresses the sociohistorical literacy practices in specific locales by concrete individuals. Three significant participant movement patterns emerged from this study and merit some elaboration. These three patterns shape the participants I selected as representative for each of the chapter's *generaciones*.

> 1. Seventeen Border Crossers from Mexico to the U.S. Born between 1920 and 1985, these participants were born in Mexico and have come to the U.S. under varying family, education, and economic factors. Contrary to public opinion and misunderstanding, it should be noted that none of these individuals came to the U.S. as a migrant worker. In 2000, the documented immigrant population from Chihuahua to the U.S. was 49,722. Moreover, "Casi la mitad de los migrantes

indocumentados en Estados Unidos entró al país con documentos temporales válidos, pero permanecieron más tiempo de lo que se les autorizó, revelo ayer un análisis del organismo investigación Pew Hispanic Center" ("Periodismo Sin Fronteras").

2. Fourteen Border Crossers from the U.S. to Mexico[15] This was an unanticipated pattern. After about twenty-five surveys and several interviews, I noticed in one survey that a U.S.-born participant had stated that as soon as he was born, his family moved to Juárez. As I prepared for our follow-up interview I went through other surveys and discovered this was not an anomaly. A common U.S. stereotype is that Mexicans want to come to the U.S., but what I discovered over multiple *generaciones* is that there is a trend in the opposite direction for multiple reasons, some of which I discuss in upcoming chapters. Most of these participants now reside in El Paso; many of their relatives do not. In 2000 the number of residents in Mexico from other countries was 492,617, and in Chihuahua State this number was 44,436. No data was specific to Juàrez, but I would place two-thirds of the 44,000 in Juàrez ("Censo General de Población y Vivienda").

3. Twelve El Paso Born and Raised. This section reflects first, second, third, and fourth *generación* Latino/as who were born and raised in El Paso. All trace their ancestry to Mexico.

These three patterns document movements back and forth to Mexico and the U.S. The Smithsonian recently shared compelling stories of movement *to* the U.S. during the *Bracero* Program of 1942-1964 in which two million Mexican nationals worked in the U.S. (Chávez, "Smithsonian Staff"). Many of these *braceros* came through Juárez-El Paso. Ironically, the study also makes the border appear one-directional. Overlooked is the back-and-forth movement and permanency by Latino/as that the *Generaciones'* Chart of Participants of Literacy and Their Movements highlights.

Because of the fluency of these movements, long-term participant experiences like those Brandt observed in Literacy in America Lives do not exist. Instead, bicultural education, socialization, and languages intermix in surprising, rapidly changing ways.

Background Research and Methodology

This project employs ethnographic, narrative, quantitative, and qualitative approaches

[15] Chávez, "Under Plan." This speaks to the new law proposed, which would affect future *generaciones* of citizens like those whose lives are discussed in the pages of this book.

as methodological guides in discovering what Gergen calls self-narrative: "The individual's account of the relationship among self-relevant events across time. In developing a self-narrative the individual attempts to establish coherent connections among life events. . . ." (187). In this same vein Ricoeur suggests a dynamic interaction takes place among participants' lived lives and the stories that they might tell about them (32), and like Reynolds and Taylor I view the stories and data that I have gathered as discursive resources. At the same time I realized that my participants were involved also in a dialogic narrative at some points, and a polyphonous one at others: *Generaciones* relies on languages and cultures, on individual and group reflections, on interviewers' interactions, and on quantitative data drawn from the entire pool of participants, which is discussed in the conclusion. Finally, I attempted to best capture the narratives of how participants become literate on the U.S.-Mexico border. I adapted my methods from Brandt's Literacy in American Lives, Selfe and Hawisher's Literate Lives in the Information Age, and Cooper's "The Ecology of Writing," which all follow an "oral-history and life-history research" approach by intertwining autobiographical, ethnographic, and ecological responses. At times I interject with my voice and my experiences to remind readers that, for better or for worse, I am selecting and negotiating the many experiences in these stories and that I am a part of the whole. Moreover, in the conclusion I focus on the quantitative responses to twenty-six questions about gateways and sponsorship from the survey participants. My motive in employing quantitative data in the conclusion is to highlight the overarching literacy experiences here.

I must confess early on that I always have been interested in and moved by people's stories. As a scholar, however, I did not have the wherewithal to methodologically exercise this secret passion. With Brandt's approach I saw hints of what I believe is personalized research. It was Selfe and Hawisher's approach in Literate Lives that made evident what I needed to do. During my participation in their electronic literacy survey leading to Literate Lives, Cindy Selfe asked me to share some of her surveys with students here in the Southwest. It was rewarding to discover the types of information their survey solicited and how it did so. In effect I saw the power of such surveying, and I saw how it could be better adapted for this area. I returned to Brandt's work and culled from it various potential models for this unique multilingual and multicultural border. Some of the changes I made were to focus more questions on extended family involvement, as this was crucial here; to allow individuals to write in Spanish, Spanglish, and English; and to include an array of quantitative questions that would be useful in revealing data otherwise not described in the stories my participants shared.

Why quantifiable questions on the survey? Unlike these other researchers I also added and included results from twenty-six quantifiable questions from my survey for several

reasons. First, I wanted to ease the survey process by providing both open-ended and multiple-response questions. Second, I felt valuable information from situated participants' experiences could be gathered and quantified in an easy-to-read and accessible format. Twenty-six questions examining and discussing the sponsorship of participants and the gateways where they were sponsored are addressed in the concluding chapter; the data of thousands of responses from all participants are useful for educators from a variety of disciplines to better understand how sponsors, including educators themselves, teach electronic literacies. Similarly, these data help us understand the ways that myriad gateways are created and accessed and thereby serve instrumental roles to help students learn and practice such literacies. Combined with the individual stories from Chapters 1-5, the quantifiable data in the conclusion may serve a role for instituting effective local change in schools, community locales such as libraries, and universities. The conclusion and its participant data are intended to serve as a polyphonus coda that both complements and is necessary to these border stories of acquiring and practicing literacies.

From the initial design of this study I knew that sole authorship would not be mine, and thus I encouraged everyone whose experiences are shared here to be a fellow writer. To maintain chapter continuity, I drafted all chapters and then encouraged co-authors Fernie Alañiz, Luciá Durá, and Terry Quezada to revise the drafted narratives of the chapters in which they are author-participants. Because of these additional narrative voices in these chapters, readers should notice additional voices, primarily in the sections when they narrate their own experiences. Once these author-participants revised, I revised the entire book based on the blind reviewers' suggestions.
The approach for gathering participants was determined by the age of the individuals in each generational category I created. I discussed earlier the three migration patterns that became evident after collecting about twenty-five surveys. At that point I decided to focus the remainder of my search for participants of literacy based on these micro-patterns in the five *generaciones* making up this work. Like Cooper's experience, the web that is this border cultural ecology became increasingly complex, yet further defined the more I entered and explored it.

The principal experiential differences between other projects looking at literacy experiences and *Generaciones* are:

1. Close family support is present in most participants' narratives in *Generaciones*,

2. Participants in *Generaciones* rely on gateways for practicing electronic literacies,

3. Participants also regularly move across international boundaries,

4. Participants expressed a reluctance to move away from the El Paso-Juàrez area, not so much because of place, but because of strong family, language, and cultural ties,

5. A variety of bilingual and bicultural contextualized learning experiences undocumented to date are expressed in *Generaciones*, and 6. *Generaciones* showcases alternative literacy practices that shape the way learners actually learn outside of school.

I collected 67 surveys[16] from participants born between 1920-1985; from these participants, I selected forty-three based on their responses and border crossing experiences. Three agreed to be co-authors in their respective chapters. Except in the case of the co-authors and the videotaped interviewees, who chose to allow me to use their full or partial real names through an additional consent form (Appendix A Video Consent Form), all participants' names are pseudonyms. The survey (Appendix B Survey Attachment) and survey consent (Appendix C Survey Consent) forms are included below. The last additional component throughout is follow-up video interviews with participants. For this, participants agreed to be videotaped during our interview and signed a consent form authorizing my use of the interview. I met with eleven participants for approximately one hour each and asked follow-up questions based on their survey responses. I edited the videos to share expanded points participants had discussed in their respective chapter. I conducted the video interviews in English or Spanish based on the participants' preferences. When the interview was in Spanish, I include an English translation next to the video. Appendix D is the *Generaciones*' Video Interview Library; here readers will find all video clips arranged in order of appearance and by chapter.

Another feature I added to the survey and interview format was to introduce the Electronic Literacy Survey as classroom subject matter in two of my classes focused on literacy. Of the forty-three participants included in *Generaciones*, several were my students at some point, so I was able to interview them throughout the class; at the first mention of a participant-student, I footnote this for readers' reference. Additionally, I created two major assignments—Cultural Ecology, and Technology Gateways/Sponsors of Literacy—for these courses. I designed these assignments with the goal of allowing participants the opportunity to voice what were significant international, national, state, and local events in their lifetimes, as well as specific literacy events[17] in their lives. The assignments helped students begin exploring their cultural ecologies and significant memories; it also helped them discover moments that

[16] An additional twelve were not used because they were incomplete.
[17] Selfe and Hawisher looked at "how literacy is related in complex ways to existing cultural milieu; educational practices and values; social information like race, class, and gender; political and economic trends; family practices and experiences; and materials conditions—among many factors" (5).

had an impact in some way in their lives. Students could respond to these assignments with visuals as well as sound and other media as appropriate.[18] The assignments strengthen *Generaciones* in that participants' multimodal voices and narratives capture a wide array of literate practices they found important in their lifetimes.

Terminology in *Generaciones* [19]

Readers will partially recognize the following terms from other researchers' literacy studies; however, here I note how I have refined these terms to help them serve as tools to shed light on behaviors, experiences, and processes I encountered in this research. These new hybrid terminologies allow readers to reconceptualize their own roles in the literacy landscapes they function and teach in daily, realizing that they play many of these roles positively, negatively, but never neutrally.

> *1. Participants of Literacy:*[20] Throughout this research I refer to those I interviewed and surveyed as "participants of literacy" or simply participants. Other terms such as interviewees, people, individuals, etc., do not seem to fit because they evoke other disciplines' research aims. The term "participants of literacy" evokes not only participation in this research but also suggests they are participants in the life processes and goals of advancing traditional and electronic literacies. The concept helps us to understand the symbiotic relationship sponsors of literacy (the second term below) can activate with participants of literacy by guiding them to full throttle literacy learning or by obviating participants' personal motivation, confidence, or even hardheadedness.
>
> All participants discussed in this book indicated on their surveys that they were of Latin, Hispanic, Mexican, or Mexican-American ancestry. Many participants were born in this area. Some came from Mexico but, often because of family connections, they have settled in El Paso, Juàrez, or both. El Paso's population of 459,157 is classified as a majority of Hispanics or Latinos (of any race), placing this demographic at 79.4% ("El Paso City, Texas: Population and Housing Narrative Profile"). By comparison, in 1930 Juárez's population was

[18] See Britzman, who, like me, found herself in a "contradictory point of no return" in attempting to graft her interviewees' narratives and her own interpretations of them. Like Britzman, Brandt, Selfe and Hawisher, I found myself quoting long blocks of my interviewees' lived experiences, and of course having to go back to summarize and paraphrase ideas (Also see Chiseri-Strater). This was a painful process for me. Their words captured the essence and soul of moments in their lives; mine are academic discourse, though I am trying to change this. Alas, it seems many of us go through this process (see Lather; Reinharz).

[19] Per blind reviewers' recommendations I footnote if a term is a hybrid or new term I developed.

[20] Author's term.

491,792 and by 2000 it had jumped to 3,052,907 ("Censos de Población y Vivienda").

It is participants of literacy that this book represents: Their stories—their successes, failures, and even their times trapped in limbo—exemplify the dynamics of real-life challenges to acquire today's literacies. Selfe and Hawisher focus on the concept of effective electronic literacy, defining it as "a level of literacy that enables one to effect change in her own life and society" (82). Brandt similarly discusses "literacy opportunity," or "people's relationships to social and economic structures that condition chances for learning and development" (Literacy in American Lives 7). These are both powerful concepts in helping researchers see factors influencing change in literacy learning, yet they both shadow the human subject-as-actor in making change. Participants of literacy often exhibit their own will to succeed as individual actors, and this is why I feel the need to introduce this term as a new concept to better observe and understand their actions. In the end our actions and responses can also determine our lives. By paying attention to the actions and reactions of the lives described in this book, others can begin to see themselves overcoming obstacles and attaining literacy through personal will, drive, or plain hardheadedness. This is not to deny the role that sponsors of literacy or opportunities play, for better or worse, in shaping literacies. With this conceptual tool at work, parents, teachers, and employers can become more sensitive to the real effects they have on those around them, and how they can play an even more positive, influential role in learners' lives.

2. *Sponsors of Literacy:*[21] Those who *allow* and *restrict* access to electronic literacies are people. Here I draw from Brandt's characterization of histories of literacy sponsorship:

> What we will see is how the histories of literacy sponsorship become abstracted into the practices of family and school life, no longer attached, perhaps, to the original ideological or economic campaigns that gave rise to them but still sending powerful messages not only about literacy but also about family, self, and world (Literacy in American Lives 149).

I discovered that sponsors of literacy are concrete individuals in participants' lives; they *allow* and *disallow* participation in physical, financial, and psychological ways. A. *Physical:*[22] This can be a teacher, parent, or employer who lets others into new or existing gateways. This may be as diverse as a

[21] Not author's term, but the noted nuances are.
[22] Author's term/nuance.

building, a classroom, or a home computer workstation. B. *Financial:*[23] This factor includes what a family can afford or what it deems as a worthy investment; what an employer deems necessary in the workplace for the employee or workplace to be competitive; and what information technology managers or other school administrators choose as purchases for their students, teachers, and employees. A subcategory is *Technology Economic* literacies primarily for economic reasons. Alicia Rodriguez's daughter (Chapter 1) served as a *Technology Economic Motivator* so that her mother could find a better job. Her daughter pushed her to attend a business college, where she would have her first contact with computers in 2005 at fifty-six years old. The daughter's motive for encouraging her mother was economic: "I was encouraged by my daughter to get a better job." Alicia responded to her daughter's encouragement and successfully learned new electronic literacies. C. *Psychological:* [24] We discover how one person, one word, one instant can effect a lifelong positive or negative change on a learner. In this specific instance, I depart from Lankshear's and Knoebel's paradigmatic model that stresses avoidance of including the psychological. D. *Direct and Indirect Sponsors of Literacy:*[25] Individuals often serve as direct and indirect sponsors of traditional and electronic literacy for their children, grandchildren, parents, friends, or others. On the one hand, an older family member who taught a younger family member to read and write served as a direct traditional literacy sponsor.

On the other hand, the same older family member was unable to directly sponsor electronic literacy. They were able, nevertheless, to indirectly sponsor electronic literacy either spiritually or financially. The direct sponsorship Elena Suarez (Chapter 1) had in the classroom on the students was negligible.[26] Her indirect sponsorship, however, of the students was unseen and unobserved; she served, I am certain, a key role in electronic literacy access for many of the students by allowing them time in the computer lab. In this way she was an indirect sponsor, allowing access and time when it might not otherwise have been possible, yet she was not responsible for lab hours, openings, maintenance, selection of equipment, training, etc. This type of indirect sponsor is often characterized negatively by students who see them as useless, unhelpful, and knowing less than the students do about electronic literacies. E. *Traditional Literacy Sponsor:*[27]

A traditional literacy sponsor, usually a family member, teaches a participant how

[23] Author's term/nuance.
[24] Author's term/nuance.
[25] Author's term/nuance.
[26] "In a climate of shortage, schools value almost any computer skills in teachers. In practice, this means that low-level operational or technical skills and knowledge predominate" (Bigum 250).
[27] Author's term/nuance.

to read and write by any means possible, including alternative means, as in the following two examples. In Chapter 1, Alicia Rodriguez told of her parents' trips to Juárez by car, where they would teach her to read the signs and materials in Spanish. Similarly, in Chapter 4, Erika Mercado recalls how, early in her schooling (kindergarten or first grade), when she was learning how to read, her grandfather was very involved: "He went as far as placing note cards all around the house so that wherever I went I had something to read. He was also very patient in helping make out all the different words and in explaining new words and their meanings as I came across them." (Activate video for Erika Mercado's expanded commentary). Elisa Alvarado's experience in Chapter 5 was more extreme: Her mother made her begin reading the Juárez newspaper after she came home with a poor reading report from school. A *Traditional Literacy Sponsor*, then, is an individual who in some way helps a participant, generally younger and related, learn to read and write. Oftentimes, these are grandparents.

3. Micro-Tear Zones:[28] These MTZs move outside of what we associate with an external sponsor's actions and become more internalized for participants. These micro-tear zones often surfaced in participants' reflections, and range from how a participant in a specific context shows patience in explaining to a new user how to use a piece of technology to someone telling a learner, "good job, bad job" or "you're hopeless." Teachers cause micro-tear zones in a variety of ways, such as negative comments about a student's capabilities and future learning abilities conveyed in a student-teacher conference, red ink on papers, or through digital voice commentary on a project. Parents also cause micro-tears by criticizing (e.g., "you're too lazy"), and showing sexist views toward women's and men's roles in society. For example, in Chapter 1, Victoria Montoya was discouraged from continuing her education, despite being a better student than her male siblings. Employers can cause micro-tears with their requirements for certifications, degrees, and literacy levels. The ways sponsors frustrate others and cause long-lasting psychological effects became clear to me from follow-up interviews and from students' class projects on sponsors; causing micro-tears is a conscious and unconscious practice teachers need to be made aware of in

[28] Author's term.

their training and is worthy of additional study.

4. *Technology Gateways:*[29] Selfe and Hawisher define technology gateways as offering sites and occasions for acquiring digital literacies that vary across people's experiences and the times and circumstances in which they grow up.

These technology gateways constitute the places and situations in which people typically gain access to computers for the purpose of practicing digital literacy, often schools, homes, communities, and workplaces (26). I have come to think of technology gateways as only physical places, though people are closely intertwined within these (See the term "sponsors" above). In this regard I stress that technology gateways can be buildings such as our homes or offices where different types of technologies are available; similarly, I stress awareness that such technology gateways house technologies like software, video games, servers, or digital cameras. Technology gateways are intertwined with people, but people who serve to allow and restrict access to technology gateways are sponsors (see 2 A-C and 3).

5. *Public Electronic Gateways:*[30] These are "open" technology areas such as schools, libraries, or other community centers with resources such as computers, software, and Internet access. These are often the types of sites that offer spaces and opportunities for learning new electronic literacies, yet as Romano indicates, "literacy education within institutional settings is not easily unpacked in terms of its social agenda" (276). Her point can be exponentially factored in when we look at how participants of literacy who navigate the borderlands in multiple languages, schools, and economies have used and been used by such public electronic gateways.

6. *Cubbyhole Gateway:*[31] These are the nook and cranny jobs requiring ostensibly little need for electronic literacies but at the same time participants find themselves in a place with technology they may end up using because it is there. Cubbyhole gateways represent mainstream jobs in the U.S., such as Laura Schuster's work in Chapter 2 in the 1980s, first in a chain store's electronics department, and later as an apartment manager: "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. [K]nowing how things worked enabled us to sell more products. This included the Sony Walkman, cameras,

[29] Not author's term, but the noted nuances are.
[30] Author's term/nuance.
[31] Author's term.

calculators and video game systems." These early electronic experiences created confidence in Laura, and she noted that

> in 1990 I was working in the apartment industry. The computers we had were only used for accounts payable. There were no other programs on them so they weren't very interesting to me. In 1992, I worked for a different company that had a computer that belonged to the Credit Bureau of El Paso. All we did was type in the name and social security of a person. We were then able to print a credit report of perspective residents. In 1993, the computers in the apartment industry now had a software called RentRoll. We could now post payments on the computer, generate maintenance requests and a myriad of financial reports. If there were any other programs on the computer we didn't know about them. 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!!!!

Cubbyhole jobs like Shuster's are everywhere in the workforce, and include positions such as a chain store clerk who uses a computerized cash register, a stocker who uses a handheld inventory computer, a delivery person who uses a handheld tracking computer, a car wash operator who uses a keypad to set the wash to fit the car, etc. These often are dead-end, low paying jobs, but they also alert many participants of literacy to the fact that they can learn to work with technology and in the webs of new, evolving literacies.

7. Micro-Literacy Zones:[32] Similar to Brandt's notion of "literacy learning," which refers "to specific occasions when people take on new understandings or capacities—not confined to school or formal study" ("Literacy Learning" 6), I suggest that micro-literacy zones make up the more prominent and visible technology gateways. Micro-literacy zones are the hidden cracks and crevices that participants often find themselves in as they perform the idiosyncratic acts of learning and practicing literacy. While generally in the home, these range from sitting in a quiet closet to read, using a computer tucked into a personal and private space at home, sitting alone with a laptop computer at a Starbucks, or, like Cristina Gonzalez in Chapter 3, visiting a relative and exploring a desktop full of traditional writing paraphernalia. These are not the official places or prominent settings where literacies are formally taught and practiced: We might call these traditional places the castles and palaces that we normally associate with success, successful schools, and successful businesses. Micro-literacy zones offer the larger institutionalized technology gateways stability and innovation; as

[32] Author's term.

well, they serve to undermine them. Micro-literacy zones are specialized places that have helped me to see and understand how and where many people jerry-rig invisible places of growth and learning that affect their internal and external lives over their lifetimes.

8. *Alternate literacy practices:*[33] Comics, newspapers, and the Bible are materials extensively read by participants throughout this research. It is important to note that these types of items are frequently shared and passed around, or, as in the case of the Bible, handed down from one *generación* to the next.

Co-Authors' Experiences

The notion of asking for participant co-authorship is not new and is most notable in Caroline Brettell's work (see also Selfe and Hawisher). There are three co-authors in *Generaciones* and below they each narrate their experiences working on this project with me.

Luciá Durá: In the field of rhetoric and composition studies the notions of authorship have been complicated by epistemological shifts and tendencies. Beyond theoretical issues, anyone who has participated in or studied collaborative writing knows that writing with others is also a practical challenge. Yet as professionals for whom writing is a daily and necessary task, we work to survive and to flourish in the midst of inner writing conflicts. From my perspective the experience of collaborating as a writer with John, Terry, and Fernie in *Generaciones* has embodied the complexity of authorship and collaboration as much as it has embodied the precepts and aspects of literacy presented in this book. From the initial research stages John has invited a polyphony of voices from the El Paso-Juárez border region to join him in an effort to expand notions of literacy as it is practiced here and as it is perceived by those who dare to judge it. In accepting to co-write one of the chapters in this book I have dared to make an attempt at representing my *generación* by selecting from our experiences what I deem the most significant encounters with different literacies.

At the beginning of this process John sent me the introduction and initial chapters for review. From the lowly post of a graduate student, I read them and returned them with questions and feedback which we would review together over coffee on weekend mornings. When he got to Chapter 4, my chapter, and handed me the file my role changed abruptly from reviewer to writer. I asked if I should place my narrative at the beginning or towards the end—interject it with other narratives perhaps? John offered little direction other than keeping with the pace of the previous chapters and adding to

[33] Author's term.

his sketch of my *generación*. As a graduate student I was honored to have such a valuable opportunity and creative license, although I often questioned boundaries in my writing and arrangement of Chapter 4. Always in control but never controlling, John would read my drafts, review them and offer feedback and suggestions over coffee. The most difficult decisions I faced throughout the writing process were issues of authorship at the participant level: whose experiences to include and at what length. I approached these issues via a practical route that entailed including as much information as possible in the earliest drafts and with the aid of time, editing content out after each reading.

Co-authoring is not easy, but perhaps because of nature of this project—as it focuses on literacy practices—it has been quite manageable and an important learning experience. In presenting us with the opportunity to engage in the *Generaciones* project, John became an active and aware sponsor of literacy. He determined the level of literacy Fernie, Terry, and I would have access to as graduate student co-authors in the research, interpretation, and writing of *Generaciones*. The combination of innovation and receptivity in our collaboration has brought forth lessons on multiple levels. As a student I have learned about the process of researching and writing for publication within academe, and as a teacher I have been exposed to positive methods for collaboration beyond the peer-to-peer models. Overall, *Generaciones* is an example of collaborative writing that works.

Fernie Alañiz: Literacy and technology was a subject I studied my junior year at the University of Texas at El Paso. It was also where I met John Scenters-Zapico, who not only taught the course but who eventually became a major sponsor of literacy and technology in my life. Sometime during the beginning of the semester, the class was optioned by John to help out with his research for his book, *Generaciones,* with a questionnaire to help us chronicle our personal experiences of growing up on the border, our families, our educational pursuits, as well as our exposure to literacy and technology. I not only filled in the spaces provided with personal accounts to assist Dr. Scenters-Zapico with his book, but it turns out that doing so also provided me with the future opportunity to assist in the creation of a chapter as a co-author, showcasing an integral gateway provided by John to the development of my literacy with technology.

As with all great memoirs, it's best to start at the very beginning, which is where I first met Dr. Scenters-Zapico and started my journey down a path towards technological enlightenment. I say enlightenment in order not to defer from the whole reason why I'm involved with this project in the first place. John radically changed my perspective of what it is to be an active participant in this world's ever-evolving stance with technology, and the advent of robots, lasers, atomic power, space exploration, and personal computers, with their shift from science fiction to science fact!

Amidst the scope of our class assignments, Dr. Scenters-Zapico challenged his students to use technology as a major source for research (Internet) as well as a method to produce and present our finished products. Relative to the course's subject matter, I took full advantage of the classroom PCs, but, moreover, took my work home with me, where I was by now fully integrated within a Mac technological gateway. There I was able to formulate and produce my presentations in a way I found to be more suited to where I was technologically at the time, with the hopes of stimulating the class with something other than a PowerPoint presentation. I used the Safari web browser for conducting my research and iMovie, iDVD and iTunes to produce my DVD presentations—not without their glitches, mind you! With overuse, my DVD burner became fried, rendering it inoperable. But where there's a will, there's a way, and that meant using an alternate route with which to present my project directly from my Mac PowerBook laptop. I was able to acquire a projector from the LACIT computer lab, connect the projector via a FireWire interface to my laptop, and project my DVD presentation onto a large screen that was provided in class. Within one lone semester I began to add more categorical experiences with technology to my résumé, thanks to Dr. Scenters-Zapico and Mac.

I have since become more proficient with Macs, utilizing my new iMac desktop, and my continued educational endeavors have enabled me to learn more about the software available to produce and enhance my artwork with such programs as Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. Along the way, I left to study two semesters at the University of Texas at San Antonio, returning to the University of Texas at El Paso in 2006. During the spring semester of 2007, I reconnected with Dr. Scenters-Zapico when we spoke of my possible role as a chapter co-author. Because this was my first attempt at such a challenge, I accepted hesitantly at first, but soon found myself immersed with reading and revising what had been compiled thus far. I was taken with the project and ultimately became protective with the content of my chapter. I was extremely impressed with John's passion, and he inspired me yet again to further write additions to the existing information as well as the formulation of this summary that you are currently reading.

As a result of my personal experiences with Dr. Scenters-Zapico, his class and the co-authorship, I've taken with me a broader perspective of the world both inside and outside of the "tortilla curtain" region known as home. This borderland experience has helped me to understand my abilities as an active citizen of a "techno-tropolis" and its literacy, bringing me closer to achieving and setting new personal goals, adapting to the ever-changing climate of computer upgrades, and believing that knowledge can come from many sources, both old and new. Coming from an era where what was once viewed as fiction has now come to fruition, I can't help but wonder what the future has in store. We strive to learn, and we learn to aim high, always keeping in mind where we

came from, and to what extent the role our past experiences play in our current development. I hang on to my life history, coalesced with a plethora of burgeoning technological advancements transporting me to the present where I continue to keep up with all the latest adaptations. Much like the music industry's attempt to regurgitate The Beatles' sound, computer companies are quickly adapting to trends started by the likes of Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Although there's really nothing like the original, I've learned to appreciate renditions thereof. From The Beatles to The Verve, Bauhaus to Nine Inch Nails, Apple to Windows, and film cameras to digital ones, adaptation is the road we travel down as consumers and creators. As long as we're able to read the liner notes and the manuals, there seems to be no limit to the expanse within our minds. Ever changing and always adapting, I look forward to more future metamorphoses, always keeping an open mind!

Terry Quezada: Collaboration is the buzzword in professional and business writing textbooks and in the workplace, and it certainly applies to *Generaciones.* As a co-author and doctoral student, collaboration was inherent in the work with my fellow co-authors. But a more subtle and pervasive collaboration was also at play. The data collected to tell the stories of the different *generaciones* we explore were personal and specific to our participants. They too were collaborators in this work; they agreed to have their stories told and our raw materials were their captured voices. By design, their stories described world, national, and regional events that were significant to our participants. For my *generación*, the events ranged from tidbits of Americana—blue M&Ms being launched and Superbowl scores—to international and national events such as the breakup of AT&T and the peso devaluation in Mexico and its impact on our borderland.

When originally researching my own timeline and preparing my cultural ecology and technology gateways, I realized how these tidbits, these events, are the very places and spaces that built my access to technology. Not all were historic, and those that were historic were not always significant to me. Therefore, when selecting from the abundance of details from our participants, I remembered my own research and attempted to pick the most colorful details, whether or not they were historic, to highlight the events or places that contributed to their own paths.

For me, the key was to select the details and weave these diverse threads into a tapestry that told the story of the individual and of the *generación*. How to move the story forward, how to pick the individual threads, how to keep the voices of the participants and the collaborators alive—this was my greatest challenge. The final product, I believe, has woven together the most colorful and the sturdiest threads to enhance the overall tapestry. I hope participants' ostensible silent collaboration is still visible in the final product, and I hope my more active collaboration with them is less visible.

John Scenters-Zapico: The first part of this research—seeking participants, reading all the surveys, and conducting follow-up interviews with some respondents—was an overwhelming and time-consuming task. Writing and rewriting *Generaciones* has been rewarding and a reminder that life and revisions are tough work, needing careful, loving attention. The stories I heard and read kept me amazed and astounded, and I knew I had to follow through on this massive project, because the stories needed to be heard and shared. The next step was culling informative, useful, and consistent information from the surveys, interviews, and student-participant projects in order to begin integrating all of this into chapters, putting it in a coherent framework, revising (always one more time), and coaxing my three student collaborators. When I thought I was done, I received wonderful feedback from the blind reviewers and revisions ensued. The last step to this book was preparing it for the Computers and Composition Digital Press. The conversion process was relatively smooth, but arranging to meet my participants, who graciously agreed to a video interview, took some schedule juggling. Finally, editing and blending the videos into *Generaciones* was a test of all my literacies, traditional and electronic. As a direct sponsor to my student co-authors, I began to feel like "the teacher" they needed to avoid. I consistently set deadlines, but these were not always met. I wondered if I was too pushy, too unrealistic. My realization as a direct sponsor and collaborator with my co-authors is that they are probably intimidated by the scope of a project like *Generaciones* and feel insecure about their voice in it. Fernie Alañiz, who became a chapter co-author later in the process, injected energy and enthusiasm into his work, as well as an unparalleled professionalism. Luciá Durá has been involved from beginning to end. Throughout the book I have blended an ethics in my method, trying to hold true to my participants' voices while juggling academic prose and structural demands, and I worked to create several *ethoi* for myself throughout by jumping in with "I" commentary and a few personal examples. While this may seem rough to some readers, my goal was simply to remind them that among all the voices in *Generaciones,* "I," "John," "Juán," "Xuán," "Tracy," "Trace," "Ace," "Scenters-Zapico," "Scenters," and "Zapico," am pulling up the curtains here and there to highlight some scenes and occlude others.

Organization and Structure of the Chapters

Readers should find that the chapters are consistently presented and structured. Each chapter focuses on experiences that came to light from the participants' stories. In this regard, each chapter both follows and builds upon the prior ones. While perusing the chapters, readers should not expect dramatic changes in participant experiences. I bring out the nuanced changes from one *generación* to the next, but I make no attempt or claim to alter the lived experiences and stories my participants shared with me. The book is not intended to cull scintillating stories; it is an ethnographic exploration of their experiences in learning and practicing literacies.

For all participants I include some personal details about their lives in order to personalize the narrative and to share with readers a hint of the cultural ecology from which they came and presently live in. In many cases I include their description of home or school to help readers who may have had similar experiences identify with them; similarly, these details may allow individuals from different parts of the world to vicariously see themselves, perhaps for an instant, as a particular participant. I maintain my participants' voices in the languages of their choice, blending an abundance of their primary quotes throughout this story of *Generaciones*. Each chapter's content is the result of surveys with the participants from the chapter, some follow-up video interviews, and contact with former students from a class I taught. These factors make the methodology rich with information and detail. In all cases, I leave the writers' original written text as they wrote it. While one reviewer wanted me to correct their "mistakes" (and even corrected some himself, putting "sic"), I purposely refrained from doing so on ethical, methodological, and ethnographic grounds.

Generaciones is composed of an introduction, five chapters of participants who bring to life the term *generaciones*, a conclusion, and fifty-three edited interview video clips of interviewees expanding on ideas from each chapter, as well as the opening clip of the bridge and pedestrians crossing the Rio Grande, which serves as the cover for *Generaciones*. Chapter 1, "*Generación* 1920-1950: Alternative Literacy Practices, Old and New Forms of Sponsorship, The Emergence of Gender Bias, and Bilingual and Bicultural Hardships," begins with traditional and electronic literacy stories by Latino/a participants between fifty-six and eighty-six years old (10% of El Paso's population) from both sides of the U.S. and Mexico borderlands. This chapter lays out the methodology for the remaining chapters by introducing quotes on literacy from the participants and occasionally a quote from a scholar whose voice is an attempt to engage in dialogue with the participants of literacy. *Generaciones* is about people voicing their practices and experiences, and because they are so enlightening I felt they had to be fore grounded in each chapter in this fashion. Second, each chapter introduces cultural ecological events that the individuals deemed important, covering international, national, and local events. Many of the events pertain to Mexico and are seen through the people of this region's eyes, events that most Americans are not aware of since they did not impact them. For example, a significant economic nightmare for many Mexicans, especially among the middle class, was the devaluation of the peso on December 20, 1994.[34] The event caused many families, such as Luciá Durá's (Chapter 4), to lose most of their possessions. Most of this ecosystem

[34] During most of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Mexican government set target ranges for the international value of the peso and entered the currency markets whenever the peso's exchange value fell out of a predetermined range. On December 20, 1994, Mexico reversed course and moved away from its target range for the peso, which led to a virtual free-fall in the peso's international value of close to forty percent between December 20 and February 1. The decision to float the peso reflected dwindling foreign

information was gathered from the participants who were in one of my literacy classes. Third, when the border crossing patterns are introduced in each chapter—Mexico to U.S., U.S. to Mexico, and El Paso born and raised—I include a chart of participants' names,[35] birthplaces, where they lived, and where they presently reside. This will help readers, especially those not from the region, to understand the internal and external complexity of participants' movements. The changes in location, the stories, and the literacy practices allow readers to begin to see patterns outside of what I am able to share in the text of this project. Fourth, each chapter includes between eight and eleven participants' experiences, representing the stories of each movement. We begin to see how these participants, despite their oftentimes culturally conflicting experiences, learned to be traditionally literate in Spanish, English, and Spanglish, and how they practiced their budding electronic literacy practices. Their stories showcase a time when technology was not as omniscient as it is today. Adding significance is the mother-daughter story of Victoria Montoya, born and raised in El Paso, and her daughter, Marcia McNamee, connected by their cultural, social, and educational experiences. While intelligent, Victoria was not encouraged to study after high school and thus followed a traditional role; because of this we see her daughter become a first *generación* college graduate, teacher, and highly literate technology user.

Chapter 2, "*Generación* 1951-1960: Cubbyhole Gateways, Micro-Tear Zones, and Self-Sponsorship," highlights a *generación* of peace and economic growth that yet experienced the threats of nuclear annihilation and the Vietnam War. We begin to hear more accounts of participants' or family members' needs for a computer and training to use it. These participants saw the technology boom of the 1980s when they were already in their 20s and 30s, while in the workplace and with children of their own. Some in this *generación* were "fortunate" to have workplace sponsors that taught and supported electronic literacies. The result was that workers here and throughout the U.S. were trained because of economic competition, not because of disinterested support for technological literacies. In turn, this *generación* was moved by economic reasons to learn new literacies of technology. Because of this interest, their children often ended up providing significant direct sponsorship for them. Moreover, these participants' contact with electronic literacies had an encouraging indirect sponsor effect on their children or grandchildren.

The onset of technology and its effects culturally reverberate strongly from the early 1960s–1970s to the present, chronicled here through the words of eight participants from Chapter 3, "*Generación* 1961-1970: Searching for Gateways, Self-Sponsoring, Experiencing Economic Motivators, and the Expanding Role of Cubbyhole Gateways."

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exchange reserves, which had been drawn on repeatedly to fend off downward pressure on the Mexican currency (Rose).

[35] All names are pseudonyms, unless permission was granted on consent forms for the use of full names.

With the various sponsors and gateways provided and transcribed here through family accounts, work experiences, as well as personal activities at home and at school, this chapter brings outsiders in to the world of both American-born and Mexican-born individuals participating actively in this "techno-tropolis" from early childhood all the way to adulthood. Deeply rooted in tradition, this Generation X from the border evolved with the ever-changing technological climate; the changing of the guard from vinyl records to music television seemed like a natural progression, bringing closer concepts once thought of as pure science fiction.

Chapter 4, "*Generación* 1971-1980: Micro-Tear Zone Psychology, Home Micro-Literacy Zones, Transport Sponsors, and School Gateways*,"* depicts the experiences of a *generación* whose participants of literacy possess motivation, perseverance, and resilience. Participants of this *generación* have set and are working to reach their educational, career, and personal goals, and they have forged their own roads to reach them. With support from sponsors of literacy and the availability of and encouragement towards technology gateways, they have etched their success in the border landscape. Although there seems to be correlation between family and economic support and success in various literacies, the participants of this chapter show that in the face of a variety of hardships, the desire to build on and surpass the expectations of previous *generaciones* creates a seemingly inexhaustible motivation. This motivation is sometimes driven by a wide array of sponsor/gateway/personal combinations that have shaped the lives of the participants represented.

Chapter 5, "*Generación* 1981-1985: Indirect and Direct Electronic Literacy Sponsorship, Cross-Border Gateways, and the Emergence of Technology Addictions*,*" reveals that this youngest *generación,* who were 20-24 years old at the time of participation, were all actively pursuing a degree beyond high school, and were for the most part exposed to technology in school. An important element that crossed countries, cultures, and languages was the sudden explosion of "affordable" home computers in the marketplace. These participants represent an exceptional window of those born smack in the middle of massive private and public electronic gateway settlements, the explosion of affordable desktop computers; thus, this chapter looks closely at how they became literate and practiced electronic literacies at school and home. Ostensibly, the explosion of technology accessibility and practice also created a new addiction to it.

The conclusion, "*Panorama, Puentes, Baches*," is less a conclusion and more a consideration of the entire research project, drawing on survey data from all participants whose experiences are reflected in *Generaciones*, as well as all the participants who responded to the survey but were not included in the stories, making it an all-inclusive panorama. It is a bridge because I introduce quantifiable data on participants' sponsors and gateways, what I see as bridges in all their complexity. It is a pothole, *bache*, in the

road because, despite socially imperfect conditions, these participants keep their drive alive with what they can, often succeeding by sharing or using hand-me-downs.