March 2021

¿De dónde eres?: Negotiating identity as third culture kids

Sophia Margulies
University of South Florida

¿De dónde eres?: Negotiating identity as third culture kids

by

Sophia Margulies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Communication
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Keith Berry, Ph.D.
Diana Leon-Boys, Ph.D.
Elizabeth Aranda, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
March 17, 2021

Keywords: passing; gender, race, transnational individuals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Sparked by David C. Pollock's (1988) concept of "third culture kids" (children of government officials and military personnel), this thesis uses autoethnography to examine "white-passing" Latinx identity and gender passing as it relates to individuals who identify as transgender to understand what it means to "pass" within these communication contexts. I situate the study at the intersections of queer, trans, and Latinx theories. Ultimately, I argue that the communicative and identity practices inherent to the liminal spaces in which third culture kids perform create the conditions for performances as transnational subjects. What the contexts of place and home are like, even if there are such places for third culture kids, to begin with, will be of particular interest.

PROLOGUE: IS IT EVEN MY PLACE?

> The dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty. As a people we have resisted and we have taken expedient positions, but we have never been allowed to develop unencumbered-we have never been allowed to be fully ourselves. The whites in power want us people of color to barricade ourselves behind our separate tribal walls so they can pick us off one at a time with their hidden weapons; so they can whitewash and distort history. Ignorance splits people, creates prejudices. A misinformed people is a subjugated people. (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 108)

I sit down for class and my eyes stare at the syllabus in front of me as my heart drops. Pupils trace the words under the required and related reading list again. Again. And again. My voice. My experience. Silenced. Once again. Not silenced, disregarded. Not disregarded just not attributed. Deliberately? Maybe. Unconsciously? Maybe. Just hopefully not purposefully. But still. I skim the course's reading list and understand what Bernadette Calafell (2007) means when she says "the field of communication studies, Latina/o studies, let alone Latina/o performance, [is] largely ignored and underdeveloped" (p. 2). That the words of "Latina/os are often simply glossed over and ignored by the hegemonic Black and white binary into which "we do not fit easily as mixed-raced peoples" (Calafell, 2007, p. 2).

By no means am I saying that the voices of the Black and white binary are unimportant. They are crucial. But aren't my voices crucial too? Not just that of Latina/os,

but of the Latinx community? Of those who are in the in-between? In the Borderlands, a conceptualization of where "the lifeblood of two worlds merge to form a third country-a border culture" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25)?

I put the syllabus down and once again glance over course readings. Double-checking. *Maybe I skipped over a name. I could be wrong. But no.* The cycle continues. I sigh and skim the faces of the rest of the class. *Are they not as upset as I am? Do they not notice who is in the narrative? Who is missing? If I nag, will it even matter?*

I am a third culture kid (hereafter TCK), specifically the child of a former United States (hereafter U.S.) diplomat, who grew up overseas, predominantly in Latin American and Central American countries. My light-skinned body ascribes me being white. *Is this even a battleground that I can tread on?* Despite being Paraguayan, I have white privilege. Despite being Paraguayan I do not correct others when they say I am from the U.S. *If I complain that there are no Latino/a/x scholars in the readings – will I be perceived as a white savior?* Sigh.

I snap back into reality in time to hear the professor say,

"As a means of introduction tell us your name and where are you from**."**

My body tenses. My breath hitches. Heart pounds.

Frozen.

The dreaded question has come.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"De donde eres?"

Others ask me this question on a regular basis, so much so I feel like I should be able to answer the question easily. I believe it is a question that most people would be able to respond to with ease. To answer the question, people simply think back to where they were born, where they grew up, and/or where they have lived for most of their lives. However, the answer is more complicated for those who live a TCK transnational standpoint. According to David Pollock (1988), a TCK "is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture" (p. 19). For Denise A. Bonebright (2010), these children are typically from diplomat families, military families, missionary families, and families who travel for work. In my case, mi papá is a former U.S. diplomat. Due to his work, I was born in Asunción, Paraguay, and have had the privilege of living in Mauritius, Peru, la República de Honduras, la República Dominicana, and the U.S. Subsequently, when people ask me where I am from, I am at a loss of words.

Do I tell them where I currently live?

Do I tell them where I was born?

Or do I give them the laundry list of places I have lived in?

Do they want to hear my list?

Are they willing to listen?

The prospect of my answering places me in a conundrum.

When I answer that I am from Paraguay and self-identify as Latinx, others display skeptic faces, perhaps because my light-skin and fluency in English ascribe my body as white. Yet, when I am in predominantly white spaces, my experiences abroad clash with any communal references and ideologies. For example, I am unfamiliar with many television shows people who grew up solely in the U.S. know about, such as Hannah Montana (Correll et al., 2006), Jonas (Curtis & Schulman, 2009), and Victorious (Schneider, 2010). My lack of knowledge of U.S. popular references, foods, and colloquial terms always places me at a disadvantage in conversations with others. In other words, I find that despite my ability to "pass" as white, I am unable to connect with white individuals outside of the fact we have similar skin tones.

This thesis examines conversations revolving around TCKs and individuals who racially and gender pass, particularly as it relates to my lived experience. Analogous to Nicole Mazzo Bennet (2016), as a TCK, I often feel "lost between identities" and instead consider myself to be a conglomeration of many (p. 269). Without having a concrete geographical location to call home, I find myself feeling a sense of rootlessness. A sentiment exacerbated by my white perceiving body and conflicting gender identity. Moreover, my body is in a permanent state of existing in the *in between* and in a *space of conocimiento*[1.1]. A space where I am trying to understand who I am and how I identify (e.g., ethnicity, race, and gender) (Aguilar, 2020). Anzaldúa (2015) explains this space as the "Nepantla," a "liminal space where transformation can occur . . .while in this space, a nepantlera can gain perspective on this overlapping and layered spaces of different cultures . . .refus[ing] to align themselves exclusively with any single individual, group, or belief system" (p. 148). Due to high mobility and cultural transition, I believe we TCKs live in the Nepantla because we are in a perpetual state of adapting and assimilating to new cultures. We find ourselves "a part-of and apart-from all cultures," and thus

the influence of multiple cultures begin to amalgamize to the point where it becomes hard to identify yourself with one specific culture, hence causing identity confusion (McCaig, 2012, p. 51; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). With this said, I find that my TCK *nepantlera* body coupled with my gender and racial passing identities are constantly under re-construction; I am always and already searching for a place to call home. This desire to belong appears throughout the current study as I unpack how I negotiated my identities amidst my travels and, in turn, provides a glimpse into how globally mobile individuals communicate their experiences.

As a transmasculine individual born in Paraguay and raised in mainly Latin American countries, I use Paraguayan and Latinx interchangeably in this study. "Latinx" is a gender-neutral term encompassing both Latino/a identities as well as individuals who identify within the queer community, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, questioning, asexual, and pansexual (LGBTIQAP+) individuals (Milian, 2017; Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020; Torres, 2018). In a time where Latinx communities in the U.S. face and endure amplified persecution, as detained immigrants along the Mexican–U.S. border are subjected to forced hysterectomies, as trans women of color are murdered at alarming rates, and as members of the LGBTQIQAP+ community live in constant fear of violence, I seek through this thesis to understand a new way of knowing the Nepantla. I explore how transnational subjects engage in communicative processes involving identity formation, identity negotiation, and passing (e.g., gender and racial passing). When disclosing their experiences to others, globally mobile individuals are subject to un-learning and (re)learning their identities through intercultural communication. Similarly, I believe individuals who racially pass as presumptively white, heterosexually pass, and/or gender pass find themselves in a constant limbo to uncover, recover, articulate, and rearticulate their identities and cultural connections.

Three research questions guide this study:

RQ#1: How do third culture kids negotiate their identities within intercultural communication?

RQ#2: How is "passing" central to resistance?

RQ#3: How is "passing" central to survival?

Review of Relevant Literature

This next section conveys a focused review of scholarship that informs my study. I describe TCKs in further detail, explore extant research on the Nepantla, examine the concept of whiteness, and elaborate on passing in relation to gender and hybridity.

Third Culture Kids. Today, as international careers are more commonplace, TCKs are increasing in numbers. TCKs are children who have "…lived in at least two different countries, [were/are] globally mobile, and [were/are] not fully part of any one culture" (Bonebright, 2010, p. 351). For reference, according to Lama Issa (2019), there are roughly 220 million TCKs around the globe. However, the effects of a TCK's experience are not limited to childhood. Rather, the cultural complexity of growing up as a transnational subject remains relevant into adulthood. In this thesis, I use the wording "third culture individuals" (hereafter, I use TCI instead of TCK) rather than kids to cater to the long-lasting effects moving around as a kid has as one grows older. For me, the use of "kids" assumes that once the individual grows up or their family stops moving, identity formation and negotiation necessarily becomes easier to articulate. In other words, the use of kids risks belittling our experiences and, further, does not account for the fact that identities are not static. Nor does it account for individual sovereignty.

According to Pollock & Ruth E. Van Reken (2001), the following four factors tend to characterize TCK in the research literature:

(1) We are physically different from our surrounding peers

(2) We have an expectation that they will return to their parents' birth country

(3) We have a privileged lifestyle compared to local citizens

(4) We view change as an ironic constant due to moving around the world.

The Family Liaison Office of the U.S. Department of State (2008) adds another characterization:

> (5) Where "third culture kids. . .experience a sense of not belonging to their passport country when they return to it [. . .and] feel most at home in the 'third culture' which they have created" (para. 1).

Although these characteristics tend to be ascribed to TCKs, I find that these attributes continue to be applicable as an adult and hence relevant to a TCI. With these characterizations in mind, there is a consensus in the literature that the constant moving and experiencing varied cultures and cultural influences make communicating identity and creating a sense of belonging challenging (Hervey, 2009).

Borderlands/Nepantla. Anzaldúa's theorization of Borderlands serves as a foundational, inspirational, and agenda-setting influence for a substantial body of scholarship, including Latinx communication and rhetorical studies (Flores, 2003; Gutierrez-Perez & Hernández, 2020). This body of work describes the border as a "dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge," and the Borderland as a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25). Although Anzaldúa conceptualized Borderlands theory by examining her Chicanx experience alongside the South Texan border (that of the Mexican-U.S.), the border she discusses also works as a metaphor for all sorts of crossings (e.g., geopolitical boundaries, social diasporas, as well as various linguistic and cultural contexts). Daniel Dechaine et al. (2012) contends the border is symbolic as it is material and affective as it is performative;

that is, borders, both physical and figurative, typically regulate how bodies move, how bodies socially identify, and how bodies understand belonging.

Borders are "neither fixed nor static; what counts as part of the inside or outside is subject to ongoing negotiation and contestation" (Bosniak, 2006, p. 7). When borders are treated as static spaces, "people's embodiments and identifications are reduced to essentialized identity categories" (Johnson, 2012, p. 35). This homogenization occurs because belonging predicates on the exclusion of others (McClintock, 1995). For example, along the geographic borders of the U.S., dominant discourses such as heterosexual supremacy ensure that cisgender and heterosexual individuals have more legal and social rights than their stigmatized LGBTQIQAP+ counterparts who are denied entry to the U.S. (Cantú, 2009; Johnson, 2012). However, the extent to which a particular demographic is excluded or included on U.S. soil varies across American history. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 restricted the arrival of Chinese immigrants into the U.S., and more recently, the "zero-tolerance" policy under the former Trump administration regulated the illegal entrance of a majority of Latin Americans along the Mexican-U.S. border by separating families (Bochenek, 2018). Further, the constant re-negotiation of the border and who is allowed to move between borders shapes and (re)shapes everyday life, from individual daily communicative practices to collective self-knowledge, to the way people forge relationships. As Dustin Bradley Goltz & Kimberlee Pérez (2012) write, "We all do the border, just as the border does each of us" (p. 176).

Anzaldúa (2007) explicates the affective nature of the border on the lives of individuals along the Mexican-U.S. border by using the metaphor of *la herida abierta*[1,2]. For Anzaldúa, this border is "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border

culture" (p. 25). In other words, the metaphor orients to the border as an injury inflicted by surrounding nation-states that were once part of a unified whole. Over time, this "whole" (i.e., Earth) has since broken up into different countries, with each breakage and boundary created, wounds form. Anzaldúa (2007) advocates that this wound along the border is in desperate need of healing, and only through the process of healing can transformation occur.

The border where *la herida abierta* continuously scabs over, so to speak, is a precarious and unpredictable space. It is a liminal space where individuals feel the existential tug of being torn between living between cultures, languages, races, and genders. Although Borderland theory is foundational to understanding borders and border experiences, Anzaldúa (2000) contends that "…people were using "Borderlands" in a more limited sense" than she had originally meant it, and, thus, she moved to embrace the *nepantla*" (p. 176). As explained earlier, the Nepantla is a space where self-reflection and personal growth can happen. A space where dis-identifications and transformation can occur (Keating, 2006). In other words, a physical and figurative space wherein individuals can challenge dominant discourses and social structures and re-negotiate and re-construct identities.

Anzaldúa (2015) conceptualizes individuals who live in the *in-between* as *nepantleras*. *Nepantleras* are "in-betweeners, those who facilitate passages between worlds" (Anzaldúa, cited in Keating, 2005, p. 91). They live within and among worlds and gain a "perspective from the cracks" (Anzaldúa, 2005, p. 2). In other words, they develop and live with a form of global and spiritual consciousness. However, in their travels, *nepantleras* are susceptible to painful experiences. Keating (2006) contends that if a *nepantlera* is unable to stay "within a single group or worldview," they are then "vulnerable to rejection, ostracism, and other forms of isolation" (p. 9). They carry the border on their bodies, where their bodies become homelands, a place "where

knowledge, memory, and pain" (Behar, 1996, p. 129) is stored. Moreover, where the body becomes a site of knowledge or a location to explore. Although the concept of *nepantlera* stems from Chicanx scholarship, as I describe in this thesis, I believe TCIs also inhabit the Nepantla as they are constantly in a space straddling multiple cultures and ways of being.

Researchers have studied Borderlands, this *herida*, and the Nepantla through im/migration data analysis (Soehl & Waldinger, 2009), identity construction (Holling & Calafell, 2007), and border rhetoric (Flores, 2003). Although the extant research literature does include (albeit in limited ways) discussions on intersections within identity, including race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identifiers, it seldom engages with individuals outside of the Mexican-U.S. border, specifically outside of Mexican populations (Arrizón, 2006; Cantú, 2009; Chavez, 2013; Flores, 2003; Quinan & Bresser, 2020). This study expands Borderlands and the Nepantla to not only account for Chicanx individuals but other transnational populations. For the purpose of this thesis, I contend transnational experiences consist of individuals who identify as bicultural, and/or have a mixed background, and/or are TCI's, are by virtue living in the Borderlands, and some in the Nepantla (Hardimann et al., 2013).

Whiteness. The examination of whiteness is crucial to the study of white-passing TCI's. For this project, I take whiteness to be a social and systemic construction that privileges one set of people (specifically white or fair-skinned individuals) over another group**.** Michael G. Lacy & Kent A. Ono (2011) write, "Whiteness studies have become one of the most vibrant areas of communication research" (p. 15). However, most scholars within whiteness studies have focused on problematic racial structures and rhetoric solely through Black and white experiences. In her critique of whiteness, Anjana Mudambi (2015) argues that "scholarship regarding the U.S. racial structure has reinforced the notion of a traditional black/white binary that does not adequately

address brownness" (p. 46). In response, while delineating histories of scholarship on rhetoric and race, Mark L. McPhail (2008) describes how in recent decades, "rhetorical scholars have expanded the conceptualization of race well *beyond the boundaries of black and white identity*" (p. 4331, emphasis in original). For the purposes of this study, to examine how racial logic and rhetorics operate outside of the Black/white binary lens means centering the operations of whiteness in relation to transnational Latinx identities. Doing so creates rich potential to unearth otherwise untapped resources for complexifying racial and ethnic categories. Specifically, this thesis builds on Chad Nelson's (2015) critical strategy to use "…Chicana/o identities [and theories] as a resource for intervention into the invisibility of Whiteness" (p. 65). Nelson (2015) argues that embracing Chicanx perspectives in historically white spaces allows for the centering of marginalized identities and an "impetus [for researchers] to expose the hegemonic constructions of whiteness" (p. 66).

One broad interventional resource to enact such labor, which is also suitable across a range of group differences and oppressed positionality, is the use of storytelling. José A. Maldonado (2020) writes,

> Subordinated groups have always told stories…Oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation. Members of out-groups can use stories in two basic ways…as means of psychic self-preservation; and…as means of lessening their own subordination…The storyteller gains psychically, the listener morally and epistemologically. (p. 104)

In other words, identity formation and the sense of belonging predicates on re-defining individual identities by un-learning and re-discovering new attributes, characteristics, and values that change an individual in tangible ways (e.g., changing one's name or physical appearance)

and intangible ways (e.g.., changing one's viewpoint of a certain culture or way of life). In what follows, these tangible and intangible ways become an important way to decipher and understand identity as well as gender and racial passing.

However, in un-learning and re-discovering oneself, the ability to belong rests on having a reference point – a point where the sharing of similar characteristics with others creates a sense of familiarity and collective identity. These reference points emerge from the act of writing stories, reading stories, and storytelling which allows for the creation of belonging and identity connection amongst individuals. When there is no reference point, it is dehumanizing not to have an identity attributed or recognized. As I mentioned above, storytelling through autoethnography is the primary method for informing this study. I further describe what this approach entails and its benefits below.

Passing and Gender. My thesis examines how passing (both gender and racial) occurs within the identity negotiation inherent to TCI lived experience. To study this issue in terms of identity *negotiation* (and not just identity *formation*) entails assuming that identity is a contested cultural process subject to "gains" and "losses" in terms of who one understands oneself and others to be (Berry, 2016; Berry et al., 2020). Issues concerning stigma and stigmatized (or "spoiled") identities commonly impact this co-constitution of identities (Goffman, 1963). This pertains to any number of marginalized identities, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, and race. In this section, I historicize discussions revolving around gender identity and expression, I define passing, and lastly, I elaborate on research relating to gender passing (with particular emphasis on the transgender community). For reference, I use cisgender (cis) to refer to a person who identifies with the gender identity with which they were born. I use transgender

(trans) to refer to individuals who run the gambit of experience and identity but, generally speaking, do not identify with the gender with which they were born.

Historically, gender has been seen as a binary classification based on genitalia and chromosomes (Dreger, 2000). Recently, terms such as "gender identity" and "gender expression" provide a new outlook towards conceptualizing gender. According to the Human Rights Campaign (2020), gender identity is an individual's "innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither," or how they perceive themselves and identify (para. 3). A person's gender *identity* can be the same or different than the sex that they were assigned at birth. Yet, one's gender *expression* is the external "appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics" associated with being feminine or masculine (para. 4). Understanding both terms allows for a better conceptualization of passing within the LGBTQIQAP+ community and suggests gender and gender performance to be a complicated and consequential process.

Generally, passing is the conscious attempt and ability of an individual of one group to be perceived as another cultural or identity group (Moriel, 2005). Passing is not always permanent but instead can be brief and situational (Ginsberg, 1996). Gender passing in the trans community refers to the concept of "being perceived by others as a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless of how the individual in question identifies" (Ritchie, 2010, pp. 2). Building off these ideas, I define passing as the continuous conscious and sometimes unconscious attempt and ability by an individual of one group to be effortlessly identified as a member of a different cultural or identity group. For instance, because I identify as a trans male, I recently decided to take hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to look more stereotypically masculine. As discussed

later in this section, the ability to successfully gender pass is typically as precarious of a process as it is affirming. Although I have taken HRT for almost a year at the time of this writing, and I am grateful for the small physical changes starting to happen, I still get misgendered in public places. To further illustrate this process, I next elaborate on some of the research conducted on gender passing and then go into gender passing in the trans community.

Within existing scholarship on gender passing (Anderson et al., 2020; Berry, 2012; Rogers, 2019; Stryker, 2017), I find two main themes appear. First, discourse on passing can often has a negative connotation and orients to this process in terms of hiding and/or covering practices (Bennet et al., 2019; Yoshino, 2006). For instance, research surrounding trans individuals often conflates passing with deception (e.g., rhetoric that trans women are cis men posing as women) (Billard, 2019, p. 472). Second, discourse surrounding passing commonly positions passing as a process wherein individuals physically alter themselves to better express themselves and increase their social capital (Moriel, 2005). For example, research around gender passing often looks at movies and novels where the character (usually a cis woman) assumes the identity of a male to ascertain cultural capital (de Gabriel et al., 2020; Weinauer, 1996). To summarize, the literature on gender passing often focuses on trans individuals (Billard, 2019) and cis identifying women passing as men to gain certain privileges (Weinauer, 1996).

Despite the theme of viewing gender passing within trans communities as a deceptive practice, Judith Shapiro (1991) counters this sentiment stating, trans individuals who identify within the gender binary “must work hard at passing in their new gender status” as they may be to relearn how to act as a certain gender and break “. . .behavioral habits acquired from years spent in the opposite gender role” (p. 144). In other words, the ability to pass is critical because it is usually based on how well they "fit" into the “female/male” gender binary. Existing

discussions on gender passing stipulate that gender identity revolves around the "heteronormative matrix," or the normative assumption that there are only two genders, gender equates to biological sex, and opposite-sex attraction is natural and acceptable (Butler, 1990; Kitzinger, 2005). It is controversial because trans individuals challenge the binary by the very nature of our existence and how we perform; however, in passing, our goals require emulating characteristics and traits in the feminine and masculine dichotomy. When these gendered performances become unrecognizable to an identity group, the individual's situation usually becomes precarious (i.e., at risk for harassment and violence) (Butler, 2009; Halberstam, 1998).

According to Walter Bockting et al. (2013), trans individuals typically pass as both a survival mechanism to avoid transphobic discrimination and as a means to affirm our gender identities. These identities are "partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others. . .nonrecognition and misrecognition can inflict harm" and "can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone else in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). In addition, trans individuals who attempt to pass often desire affirmation for our current gender identity instead of our assigned gender at birth. Shweder et al. (1998) writes, "to be a member of a group is to think and act in a certain way, in the light of particular goals, values, pictures of the world; and to think and act is to belong to a group" (p. 722). Put differently, to belong in a group that is different from one's own, one must exhibit traits that are seen as acceptable and coveted to pass as "one of them." Attempting to pass as cis can happen in many ways, including through an individual's dress attire and/or through the option of medically transitioning.

Passing and Hybridity. The personal story I convey and examine on Latinx racial passing in this thesis necessarily leads me to incorporate the concept of "hybridity" or "mestizaje." By hybridity, I mean the mixture of different races (e.g., white Latinx) and cultures (e.g., transcultural ideologies) (Anzaldúa, 2007; Bhaba, 1994; Mendieta, 2000). While notions of hybridity animate scholarship surrounding various racial, ethnic, and cultural identities and formations, more generally, they are especially relevant for white-passing Latinx people and TCI's.

While at some level passing might suggest, at some level, conceptually distinct categories, extant research on hybridity points to situations where any "either/or" identities are misleading and untenable. For instance, Tina M. Harris (2000) observes, "Cultural duality is a common and quite apparent phenomenon" and for those who "…come from a multiracial background but whose features do not reveal such a lineage, a search for cultural identity can be a lifelong and tumultuous journey" (p. 211). The process of understanding identity poses a conundrum for Latinx individuals because, despite common cultural elements such as speaking Spanish and sharing a history of Spanish colonization coupled with U.S. intervention in both the Caribbean and Latin America, they are considered "racially heterogeneous" (Flores-Gonzalez et al., 2014, p. 1846). According to Linda Alcoff (2000), in the U.S., Latinx individuals are considered racially heterogeneous because they do not share common genetic or biological traits. Therefore, Latinx is not considered to be a racial category. Yet, none of the recognized U.S. racial categories reflect Latinx racialization (Morning, 2011; Rodriguez, 2000). For reference, racialization is the process through which dominant groups use biological and cultural features to construct a hierarchy wherein both dominant and subordinate groups have their own collective social factors (Grosfoguel, 2004, p. 326). In terms of the U.S., this process is most apparent

when identifying races along the “white” and “black” spectrum (Grosfoguel, 2004). Instead of viewing Latinx as a race, Latinx is adjudged to be a homogeneous pan-ethnic group often reflected with terms such as Hispanic and “Latinidad.” These terms assume an all-inclusive cultural identity but fail to recognize the “varying nationalities, racial and gender identities, generations, languages, immigrant status, and mobility, among others” (Martinez, 2019, para. 6; Molina- Guzmán, 2006). Further, the lack of fluidity amongst each term aids in sustaining racialization. Said cultural homogeneity has been critiqued in academic areas such as Latina/o/x communication studies (Calafell & Moreman, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2019), critical media studies (Leon-Boys, 2019; Molina-Guzmán & Valdivia, 2004), and intercultural studies (Moreman & Calafell, 2008). This project adds to ongoing conversations revolving around the constraining nature of the term “Latinx” as it pertains to globally mobile individuals such as TCIs.

It is important to define Hispanic and Latinx because both are often incorrectly used in interchangeable ways. Hispanic “denotes a person with origins or ancestry from Spanish-speaking countries (not exclusive to Spain)” (Rinderle, 2005, p. 37). In comparison, Latinx refers to “...a person residing in the U.S. of Latin American national origin or descent regardless of race, language, or culture” (Rinderle, 2005, p. 37). Some scholars view the term Hispanic as problematic because it does not attribute to Indigenous nor African cultures and has colonial roots (Moreman, 2011; Muñoz, 1989). Susana Rinderle and Danielle Montoya (2008) argue that the U.S. Census distills Hispanic and Latinx respondents' identity choices into only five categories. Out of the five choices, the U.S. Census conflates Latin Americans and Hispanics under the pan-ethnic option “Hispanic/Latino.” Equating Latinx and Hispanics fails to account for other identifiers such as Chicano/a/x, Mexican American, and Afro-Latino. Moreover, the

limited categorization options for Latinx individuals in the U.S. further perpetuates the erasure of varied ethnicities, blurs cultural identities, and makes belonging within Latinx communities more challenging. However, even these labels and identifiers leave little to no room for fluidity, especially for mixed Latinx performers.

For Latinx individuals, appearances can affect how individuals negotiate identities to the point of an identity crisis. According to Erik Erikson (1970), identity crisis is a period where a person's identity becomes insecure, typically due to some sort of change in their role in society (e.g., finding out there is a difference between the terms "Hispanic" and "Latinx"). Francisco Rodriguez (2020) stipulates that this identity crisis among Latinx individuals happens due to two phenomena: acculturation and bi-culturation. Acculturation ". . .relates to adopting the idea of residing in a multi-cultural or new culture in general due to colonization or other political factors," while bi-culturation, relates to the loss of identity as it pertains "…to the blending of two cultures" (p. 39; see also Rivera-Santiago, 1996). Because of this multiplicity, "Latina/o identities and communities are always in the process of making and unmaking" (Calafell & Delgado, 2004, p. 18). If taken seriously, this recognition underscores the need to consider varieties of identities and experiences. For instance, Shane T. Moreman's (2011) study on white hybrid identity demonstrated that half white and half Latino individuals tend to face the challenge of fitting into both cultures while also creating credibility as a Latino despite their light skin. Therefore, the conceptualization of hybridity is needed to examine the essential "in-betweenness" characterizing much of Latinx identity and rhetoric about identity (Kimoto, 2018; Morris, 2018).

Summary. In review, this study of my identity formation as a white-passing Latinx transnational subject entails examining these related conceptual issues: TCIs, Borderlands/Nepantla, passing and gender, and passing as it is informed by hybridity. As a TCI, understanding the literature surrounding TCIs provides a foundation to how transnational subjects communicate their respective identities in varied cultural environments. Because TCI's experience a sense of rootlessness in any given environment, conversations surrounding Borderlands/Nepantla are essential to understand how identities negotiate in liminal spaces, specifically Latinx identities. As a white-passing Latinx individual, it is critical to better understand what it means to both gender and racially pass with respect to my work to untangle how I continue to maneuver through spaces. In a broader sense, comprehending how transnational nomads form and negotiate identities enables a deeper insight into globally mobile experiences and the phenomena of passing in these communicative contexts.

Theoretical Framework

I rely on three theoretical frameworks in my investigation of TCIs: intersectionality, theory in the flesh, and mestizaje. Next, I describe how I use intersectionality as a primary theoretical framework within my thesis. Then I introduce the concepts "theory in the flesh" and "mestizaje" to elaborate on Latinx experiences.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is the primary theoretical framework in this thesis, which helps to acknowledge and elaborate on identity formation in at least two main ways. In short, the approach helps to disentangle the power structures in my process of understanding my white-passing Latinx body and how I came to acknowledge my transmasculine identity.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) first used the term "intersectionality" to discuss black women's employment in relation to power in the U.S. The theory explains that our identity

categories interact and interlock with power. Further, one's identities are always affected by power structures, which situate one's privilege, social status, economic status, socio-cultural mobility, and marginalization. The interest in intersectionality began as a way for scholars to critique both gender-based and race-based research because such research typically failed to account for the lived experience of marginalization between dominant and subordinate social groups (McCall, 2005). The theory itself has expanded to explain how individuals who live and dwell at '"intersections" of sites of power are faced with either more marginalization or more privileges, respectively.

For example, when trying to understand discrimination in the workplace, conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion look at gender diversity under the female and male binary. However, using the theory of intersectionality, one can see other discrepancies. Case in point, when looking at the overlapping identities amongst women in the U.S. workplace, writers Zuhairah Washington and Laura Morgan Roberts for the Harvard Business Review (2019) found that women of color represented "only 4% of C-Level positions" while white women made up 19% (para. 3). This example shows that it is not enough to view gender equality as solely affecting the homogeneous groups of males and females. In other words, those who engage with intersectionality typically frame the dimension of one's identity as intersecting, rather than paralleling, to avoid a "single-axis framework" (Molina-Guzmán & Cacho, 2013) of discrimination. In other words, identities cannot be analogous. In this example, one cannot view the identity of "female" solely under a gender lens. Instead, it merits looking at the identity through other overlapping demographics to understand why some populations over others experience disadvantages. Moreover, gender, race, and ethnicity's overlapping identities create further disadvantages for women in the workforce.

Researchers commonly study diverse intersections, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, ability status, and language. In the past twenty years, more communication scholars have engaged with intersectionality to theorize gendered texts and performances, suggesting they contribute to the production of cultural, social, and/or political inequality (see, for example, Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Valentine, 2008; Vega & Chavez, 2018). Overall, intersectionality helps scholars reveal how individuals live with multiple identities. Identities that implicate us and affect the particular relationships we maintain with others, and related issues concerning access to power within sites and situations (Bright et al., 2016; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2013).

Theory in the flesh. I rely on "theory in the flesh" to more fully and circumspectly explore Latinx trans subjectivities. According to Moraga & Anzaldúa (1983), for Chicanx, Latinx, and people of color, "a theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives all fuse to create a politic born of necessity" (p. 23). The theory holds five central concepts: (1) the family is foundational in socialization, (2) theory must be grounded in emotional investment, (3) social location and experiences are interrelated, (4) the body is a primary source of knowledge, and (5) individual and communal struggle are integral to the formation of political consciousness (Moya, 2002). In other words, the "flesh" emphasizes the body as a site on or within which people of color experience painful material effects (e.g., negative stereotypes on women of color might disqualify them from certain jobs). Its fluidity allows for an in-depth understanding and analysis of lived reality, specifically related to the body.

The body is a contested and discursive cultural site that has been studied throughout history. As early as the 17th century, the body was viewed as a rational biological object that can be directed, disrupted, and controlled (Poullain de la Barre, 1673; Stanford Encyclopedia of

Philosophy, 2019). Since then, Puar (2007) found that research of the body shifted to viewing identities as an assemblage. Doing so enabled scholars to focus on information, affect, and feeling. Further, more researchers have engaged with the body in intimate scholarly ways which speak to "fleshy materiality" (Foucault, 1991), lived experience (Grosz, 1995), and "construction of subjectivity" (Spillers, 1987). This work transgresses viewing the body as a discursive entity. Instead, it addresses how material practices interweave with discursive elements, which affect and shape the materiality of the body. In other words, contemporary literature that focuses on the body and embodiment has started to disrupt privileging rationality and instead accentuates emotion (Calafell, 2019).

Theory in the flesh at its core views the body as a site that cannot be essentialized (Calafell, 2019). Instead, the theory views the body as complex, ridden with feeling, emotion, and experiences. Carla Peterson (2001) writes, "When invoking the term 'body,' we tend to think at first of its materiality — its composition as flesh and bone…but the body as we well know, is never simply matter, for it is never divorced from perception and interpretation" (p. ix). In both metaphorical and literal senses, the "flesh" provides a glimpse into an individual's agency (Nagel, 2019). Moreover, Anzaldúa & Moraga's (1981) theory in the flesh views the body as a radical site of possible theorization and knowledge through analyzing one's lived experience. Specifically, theory in the flesh provides a way to resist hegemonic constructions of identities by centering the experiences of marginalized bodies. In privileging the voices and standpoints of marginalized individuals, theory in the flesh has been critical in research that aims to re-center the experiences of women of color. According to Calafell (2010), engaging with theory in the flesh has ". . .been one of the primary ways in which we have been able to theorize about our

experiences when we have been denied access to traditional forms of knowledge production" (p.105).

My thesis uses theories in the flesh alongside intersectionality to further understand transnational experiences. Nagel (2019) describes that "where intersectionality may interrogate the endpoint of identity, flesh pushes back on the hegemonic forces at play" (p. 430). In other words, intersectionality alone does not permit scholars to keep up with the constantly changing rhetorically constructed categories such as race and gender. Thus, the flesh recognizes the fluidity of identity categories and allows for the enactment of agency in maintaining and communicating one's identities. In this thesis, I build on Nagel's (2019) position that the flesh is malleable and recognizes that the flesh is "the core essence from which we can rethink the nature of subjectivity and the body" (p. 429). Also, akin to Robert Gutierrez-Perez (2018), I utilize the theory of the flesh "as a metaphorical and material bridge between rhetoric and performance to privilege experiential, subjugated knowledge in order to center the monstrous experiences of nepantleras in everyday life" (p. 345). Additionally, I use the theory of the flesh to resist white hegemonic narratives and center the experiences of transnational subjects and TCIs.

Mestizaje. Anzaldúa's (2007) research offers an instructive example of the blending of bodies and lived experience in ways that do not forego the necessity of language. She sees historical context, flesh, and ambiguity as sites of possibility. At its core, the concept "mestizaje" is associated with the term "mixed" and is commonly understood to mean the offspring of two cultures – mainly between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers. When discussing the concept of mestizaje, it is important to define what *mestiza* consciousness and la *mestiza* mean. The mestiza consciousness is a discursive move that accounts for the bodies and their positionalities (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 100). As a discursive and bodily consciousness tool, la

mestiza is a strategy deployed to navigate the borders (literal and figurative) and allows for ambiguities of identity categorizations between people of different subject positions. Put differently; la *mestiza* is a border crosser and a bridge maker that navigates different cultural boundaries to create solidarity despite political differences.

Mestizaje is important in understanding identity negotiation and passing within intercultural communication because it allows space for coalitional possibilities, meaning it accounts for mixed racial and ethnic identities. Looking at mestizaje allows for a deeper understanding of historical transformation and cultural memory of the body and spaces. According to Alicia Arrizón (2006), it refers to the process of locating the discursive intersections of the body and the related ambiguity that is typically experienced by precariously raced and gendered Latinx bodies who are situated in the traditional western binary (i.e., an often black or white world). Within these discursive intersections, Anzaldúa (2007) contends that identities are not in opposition but rather are concurrent with one another and have a capacity for change. With respect to the current thesis study, as a transmasculine Paraguayan with Indigenous, Russian, and Jewish ties, my use of mestizaje is vital in so far it allows me to further elaborate on the especially complicated nature of my transnational experiences and to challenge discourses that surrounding racialized, gendered, and sexualized identities amidst my travels.

As such, engaging with mestizaje enables me to elaborate on passing and hybridity by focusing on the material effect colonialization has had and continues to have on Latinx bodies and identities. Akin to intersectionality, mestizaje allows for looking at hybrid identities in relation to power. In other words, this theoretical framework provides a means to deconstruct and disentangle the viewing of Latinx individuals as pan-ethnic by emphasizing after-effects of

fusing two opposite cultures (e.g., for me, Paraguay and the United States) that inevitably form a third culture experience.

Methodology

In this next section, I define autoethnography and the research practices it entails, the benefits the method affords researchers, and how I will deploy autoethnography in my thesis.

Autoethnography. Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 39).The method creates a space in which scholars can deploy various experiences, positionalities, and standpoints that can come into the conversation, all to foster understanding and possibility within a cultural context (Johnson & LeMaster, 2020). As Bochner & Ellis (2016) write, autoethnographers "… examine their actions and dig underneath them, displaying the self on the page, taking a measure of life's limitations, of the cultural scripts that resist transformation, of contradictory feelings…" (p. 57). Extant research that uses autoethnography shows autoethnographers using a variety of forms, such as indigenous ethnographies (i.e., developed from colonized and marginalized individuals seeking to disrupt power structures), narrative ethnographies (i.e., stories emerged from ethnographic fieldnotes), and personal narratives (i.e., the researcher viewed their experiences as the phenomenon worth writing on to understand the cultural context in question better) (Berry, 2007; Hobson, 2013).

Autoethnography personifies how writing is a *method of inquiry* (Richardson, 1994). In this way, the method provides room for researchers to write and understand themselves reflexively and reflectively in conjunction with how they communicate with others in a given cultural context. Generally, the goal of autoethnography is to use personal experience to understand (1) how the researchers' bodies are positioned and come to matter in a given space,

(2) how the researcher is affected by both privilege and oppressive forces, and (3) how the researcher is affected by socio-cultural power structures (Spry, 2009; Ghabra, 2015; Denzin et al., 2008). Tony E. Adams et al. (2017) writes, "…given the focus on personal experience, *autoethnographers speak against, or provide alternatives to, dominant, taken-for-granted, and harmful cultural scripts, stories, and stereotypes"* (p. 3, emphasis in original). To reiterate, autoethnography provides a space within academia for researchers to engage with how their lived experience is and has been affected by cultural and systemic power structures and how these systems influence identity formation (Boylorn & Orbe, 2021).

Four practices that shape autoethnography include thick description, vulnerability, reflexivity, and flexibility of language. First, by definition, thick description entails "…recording personal and cultural experiences in descriptive, thoughtful, and illuminating ways" (Manning & Adams, 2015, p. 192; see also, Geertz, 1973). In other words, such description allows researchers to invite readers who dwell outside of a given culture to immerse themselves within, make meaning, and better understand practices and significance of that context.

Second, because autoethnography focuses on the self-narrative or the auto-biographical voice concerning social contexts, the method itself is inevitably vulnerable (Minge & Zimmerman, 2012). Autoethnography performs as both participants, collaborators, and actors in their stories (Tilley-Lubbs & Bénard Calva, 2016). The act of writing and sharing these stories calls for vulnerability because we are letting readers into our lives. Bochner & Ellis (2016) write, "[Autoethnographers] are vulnerable observers and vulnerable writers. They make their work personally important, exalting difference, responsibility, and openness to otherness by showing their faces" (p. 81). As the researcher re-tells their experiences through personal narratives, the

researcher allows readers to see in "real-time" how the author works through their emotions, experiences, mistakes, and epiphanies.

Third, autoethnography typically requires the practice of reflexivity. According to Bryant Keith Alexander (2011), reflexivity "is an act of political self-awareness" (p.105). The practice entails researchers thinking about how our bodies and others' bodies are implicated within their narratives. Reflexivity in autoethnography allows researchers to reflect upon and write our past experiences "with critical detail to [their] role in the moment of remembrance and how that newly discovered understanding might inform [their] role in social change" (Alexander, 2011, p. 105). Further, in writing personal narratives, the researcher is continuously implicated "in and by the text and the life it depicts" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 70).

Fourth, language shapes autoethnography. The language we use within the personal stories is intrinsically connected to the researchers' identity. In other words, language and communication are the basis for how we express ourselves. Thus, the ability to play around with language by code-switching is common in some autoethnographies (Velazquez, 2019).

More generally, autoethnography informs my thesis study in at least four main ways. First, the method commonly involves the production of first-person accounts that speak in often vivid ways to people's consequential lived experience with others in the culture. The stories that comprise my thesis will offer readers an intimate and personal account of what it is like to live as a white-passing Latinx TCI. Second, autoethnography commonly advocate the use of emotion to amplify the meaningfulness of personal stories. The vignettes in my thesis reveal the emotional turmoil I have regarding my white-passing trans masculine Latinx identity and how I come to understand myself through my travels. Third, the method provides a space in which autoethnographers convey and explore stories that we hope resonate with readers' own stories

(Bochner & Ellis, 2016). In sharing my stories, I do not want to map out a precise framework onto other experiences. Instead, I hope that my narratives resonate with readers who are amidst understanding their racial/ethnic identities and/or gender identities. I also hope my narratives resonate with those who are attempting to understand how they pass in society. Fourth, autoethnography immerses researchers and readers in the practice of describing and critiquing issues that fuel cultural life (Boylorn & Orbe, 2021). In this study, I make sure the reader knows when and where my narratives take place by adding the name of the country and the year the event took place. As I re-tell my stories, I move back and forth between the past and present to showcase identity negotiation's evolving and continuous nature.

My personal stories focus on what it looks like and means to relate and perform as a white-passing Latinx transnational subject. They demonstrate how I came to understand the differences between Hispanic and Latinx, how I learned about my Paraguayan identity, how I came to understand my whiteness, and how I learned about my gender identity. When I engage in issues of racial passing (Chapter Two), I use a decolonial framework to help with analyzing my narratives. More specifically, I engage in the process of code-switching between English and Spanish. When I code-switch and write in Spanish, I provide the English translation for each such moment in endnotes.

At least two main issues concerning researcher ethics inform my autoethnography. First, it is important to work in ways that involve relational ethics. According to Carolyn Ellis (2007), relational ethics "requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and initiate and maintain conversations" (p. 4). As such, relational ethics necessitates that autoethnographers recognize the dynamic and complex ways in which researchers and readers are connected through writing. In addition, autoethnography involves a

"back-and-forth" between the vulnerable self and situating experiences in the broader cultural context. In other words, when we write about ourselves, we are also writing about others. That autoethnography entails writing about others is important, in part, given that mentioning others within our stories makes them subject to be recognizable, if not properly masked. In this case, masking means working to obscure or hide identifiable characteristics which may "out" persons implicated by one's narratives. In my thesis study, I enact this ethical labor as much as possible by changing their names (using pseudonyms) while also ensuring that there are no identifiable characteristics that could potentially implicate them.

The second issue relates to the precarity of memory. Bochner (2007) addresses the faultiness and slipperiness of memory work, writing, "memory never provides unmediated access to the past as it was; indeed, memory work is itself a form of mediation, of rewriting, revising, remembering, and recounting" (p. 20). In other words, remembering in itself is a mediated process. Whenever we look back at a memory, at the moment, the way we look at the event in question, that respective moment, we look at it in a different perspective and, therefore, a different remembering of self (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). As I write my vignettes, I use italics throughout to indicate my reflexive thought process while also using quotation marks around the fictionalized character's possible dialogue. In being reflexive, I am mindful that the way I re-tell my stories does not imply that the events happened *exactly* how I describe them.

Ideal Readers

Working on this thesis has immersed me in a research and writing process that allows me to tackle issues of TCI identity negotiation as well as "passing." As I re-told my memories through narratives, I thought back to my friends and family members who have had similar experiences abroad. I long to reach out to them; however, I am scared that time has made those

connections nonexistent. I stipulate that it is a common fear for TCIs to reach out to friends and colleagues you've lost touch with, afraid that it might be too late to reconnect. As I wrote, I also kept in mind those looking for resources to understand transnational individuals and those who pass as a certain race and/or gender. I have written this thesis for and with:

- other TCIs who have yet to resonate with anything they have read in academia. I hope this thesis gives you space to reflect upon your travels and choices, including how you answer, "Where are you from?"
- youth and adults who are in the continuous pursuit of figuring out who they are or are not. I write convinced that despite how alone we might feel, the truth is, we are never alone.
- youth and adults who seek to understand their childhood and come to terms with their racial or gender identity. Despite the tug of war you feel (e.g., if you are biracial, which race you embrace and/or are trying to understand better), I want the thesis to advocate the importance of embracing the respective tugs and the act of seeking the information you need to understand what you are feeling. If you cannot find these resources, akin to late queer Chicanx artist Frida Kahlo, I encourage you to say to yourself, "I am my own muse. I am the subject I know best. The subject I want to better" (Grimes, 2019). As long as you are happy, as long as you feel comfortable in your skin, that is all that matters. Also, I am proud of you.
- people who are coming to terms with their transnational, multicultural, biracial, and multiracial being.
- people who im/migrated and are still trying to connect with their "home" culture.

- students, teachers, and researchers who study and educate on issues of identity, race, gender, and transnational subjects. I want this thesis to contribute to class discussions, ongoing conversations, and future research on global issues in ways that help you to help others understand and empathize with people who are trying, sometimes to the extent of great existential torture, to understand their respective identities.

Working on this thesis has immersed me in a research and writing process that stems from a poem I wrote in my third year of undergraduate (referenced in Chapter Two). As I read the poem, I realized how lost I was when it came to understanding who I was and who I am. When I googled for experiences similar to mine, I found that we were all on the same boat. We were all trying to understand ourselves by sharing our stories in hopes that someone will resonate. We were all trying to understand w*hat was/is wrong with us* when we should have been asking, *who else is out there*? My lived experience as a TCI has required me to build and walk my own path of self-discovery. A path that reminded me that, like my fellow transnational subjects, our identities are critical to be understood yet complex to describe. I built the walkway by articulating my memories into words. The stories were all in me. The poem was just the catalyst that would bring me here, to you.

Chapter Overview

In review, this thesis pursues answers to these research questions: *How do third culture kids negotiate their identities within intercultural communication? How is "passing" central to resistance? How is "passing" central to survival?*

I answer these overarching questions by tackling two different identities in two analysis chapters, respectively. In Chapter Two: "Estoy Cansado[1.3]," I explore stories that speak to theory in the flesh, mestizaje, the Nepantla, and intersectionality, to understand racial and ethnic passing

as it relates to my lived experience. The metaphor of a play coupled with the usage of a decolonizing autoethnographic framework enables me to dissect my experiences as a white-passing Latinx TCI. My vignettes fluctuate between English and Spanish, as well as my past and present experiences to analyze the relational construction of identity through time and space while living abroad as a child of a former diplomat. These narratives use "she/her" pronouns as those were the pronouns I used and were given to me growing up. In the Nepantla, identity formation occurs – evolving through both ascribed and avowed identities - all to understand what it means to call a place "home" – if there is such a place.

In Chapter Three: "Manteniendo el fuego[1.4]," I explore my gender identity, specifically how I came to terms with my transmasculine self. In addition to the Nepantla and intersectionality, I apply José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) notion of aspirational future queerness, Judith Butler's (1998) theory of gender performativity, and Butler's (2009) discussions of gender performance as being precarious. Further, I convey my stories to question my safety as a trans male in an era when the U.S. is facing a national epidemic concerning trans murder rates. The chapter follows a play metaphor through episodic narratives in "queer time," where instead of following a linear progression of time, the vignettes are a conglomeration of the past, present, and future. Each narrative engages in self-reflexivity and reflection through an internal and outward dialogue to highlight the tensions surrounding societal expectations on passing due to the stereotypical gender binary. Through my experiences in passing as my assigned gender at birth and my avowed ender identity, I engage in ongoing conversations of gender passing as resistance, passing as precarious, and passing as survival.

I end Chapter Two and Three by providing Curtain Call sections in which I convey additional reflections and tentative conclusions about the stories I share in the given chapter. In

Chapter Four: “Reconvening in the Nepantla,” I offer additional conclusions about my central focus and its importance, provide my reflections on the usage of the method, and offer theoretical contributions.

[1.1] Knowing
[1.2] An open wound
[1.3] I am tired
[1.4] Keeping the flame alive

CHAPTER TWO: ESTOY CANSADO

I am tired of living in a Catch-22. My existence a place of strife. My body seldom meeting the expectations of others for what it means to be white and/or Latin American. Despite the numerous times I advocate for my Paraguayan identity en Español through my non-gringo Spanish accent, my whiteness precludes me from any form of belonging in Latinx spaces. Yet, when I try to form connections in white spaces, my TCI experiences of living abroad exclude me from any sort of understanding of cultural references.

I am tired of having my identity forced into a pair of standardized boxes in every job or graduate program application I complete. Where my "Hispanic/Latin American" identity is an ethnicity, whereas my light skin forces me to check off "white" for race. Such labeling serves as a reminder that colonization reigns supreme in a time of newfound "commitment" to diversity, equality, and inclusivity. I check off the boxes for others to categorize me. An attempt to "understand" and "include" me. A task easier said than done when neither demographic fully accepts you.

I am tired of answering the question "Where are you from?". While growing up as a TCI, I realized that the need to ask this question meant one of at least three main things: First, in the literal sense, they are asking you where you grew up. Second, they are determining your cultural background. Third, they are inquiring about your place of residence. In other words, a question posed to uncover if you both have anything in common. However, because I am a TCI, "where are you from" is a complicated question for me to answer. No one wants to hear a 30-second

elevator blurb of where I lived. Trust me; it is a sure way of ending a conversation because, to me, the questioner can never relate.

In this chapter, I work through the ways in which I performed *not* to feel tired. For most of my childhood, this meant seeking safety under whiteness. A safety "umbrella" held by mi papá, a white New Yorker, and my American passport. An umbrella that granted me a place to hide under while abroad (i.e., not in the U.S.). I hid in the shade, feeling content in answering the question, "Where are you from?" with "the U.S." My fluency in English and light skin cemented my response, leaving my identity go unquestioned. However, the comfort provided by this umbrella dissipated when we moved to the U.S. How was I to answer the question when the former unchallenged answer of "the U.S." would make no sense given the context? Nor could I say that I was from any given state. I did not grow up with or equivalent to my fellow classmates, and both my knowledge of U.S. history and lack of cultural knowledge outed me as an "outsider." *I guess it was not normal by elementary school to know the names and capitals of all fifty states and all the presidents of the U.S. Also, how was I supposed to know what peanut butter and jelly was and tasted like?* My verbiage also differentiated me from my white peers. I could not (and arguably still cannot) correctly pronounce words such as "scarce" and "Capri sun" (nor did I know what that was at the time). I also use/d terms such as "valise" instead of suitcase and "ablution" instead of showering/using the toilet. Not even my English abilities that I learned from mi papá were enough to warrant and guarantee a place within whiteness. And whenever I responded with, "I was born in Paraguay," all I received were skeptic glances. My non-gringo accent when I spoke Spanish gave me partial credit on what should be an A+ answer, as it was the truth.

I hold an American passport, yet this is not home for me. This should be my home, no? On the flip side, I have a Paraguayan birth certificate. That should be my home, no? But neither feel, to me, like home. I have always thought governmental paperwork legitimized an identity. Was that not why there was a five-year wait on issuing visas, green cards, and even longer to be a naturalized citizen in the U.S.? Yet despite having the documents to prove my identity, I felt like an outsider.

It is not enough to share my experience as a TCI in a linear format. Therefore, the stories I share in this chapter intersperse between the past and present. In conveying and exploring my memories, I navigate through tumultuous waters seeking to understand my Latin American identity and U.S. citizenship. I do this through remembering my experiences abroad while also mulling through snippet stories mi papá told me about mi mamá y su familia Paraguaya. I do so because I never, and will never, meet mi mamá, nor will I genuinely connect with her side of the family due to her passing and my upbringing. And whenever I do speak with them in Spanish, their usage of mixing Guarani and Spanish confuses me and reminds me of the rift between us created by both time and distance. A rift crossed only by a Band-Aid of sporadic back and forth messages through my cellphone or computer. This rift has shaped me significantly. If I were a land, I would have two distinct fault lines on either side of me converging against one another. One more so than the other depending on the situation that I am in and the choice of words I choose to identify. The privilege that comes with said choice. And ipso facto, challenges.

In these ways, as mentioned in Chapter One, the current chapter invites readers into my experiences with racial and ethnic passing as a TCI. Theory in the flesh, mestizaje, and the Nepantla serve as a framework to understand what it means to pass and why passing can be both crucial and detrimental. I re-tell the stories of my experiences through a four-act “play”

interspersed with a series of vignettes and poems that interplay between a mix of Spanish and English. As I read what I wrote in earlier drafts of this thesis, I noticed themes developing within my narratives and poetic verses. Themes I could better tackle and reflect upon through the play metaphor.

To deliver and unpack these stories, the dramaturgical language I use is meant not to mimic a form of theater drama art but instead to feature a conversation of moments. The acts themselves act as a border space, if you will, a place where I can "negotiate between multiple gender identities and the corresponding negotiations for differing sexualities" (Moreman & McIntosh, 2010, p. 120).

Decolonizing Autoethnography

Coming to the method. I come to decolonization as a framework for my autoethnography, hoping to focus on hybrid experiences and identities whose existence challenges colonialization. I seek to open a space where both my whiteness and my Paraguayan identity could openly collide. A space where my colonizer body and my colonized roots could converse and include counter-narratives that reflect on my transnational body. A body that has traveled around the world and whose ability to speak both English and Spanish puts me in a state of constant cultural slippages. In other words, my ability to communicate in English initially allows me access to white spaces; however, my lack of U.S.-centered cultural experiences eventually ostracizes me. While my ability to speak Spanish allows me access to Latin American spaces, I am typically rejected in these spaces due to my white body and while simultaneously deemed as "Other." This occurrence is ironic given that I spent more years living in Latin America than in the U.S. Nevertheless, my body is in a constant tug of war between two worlds. A war that I find is best understood through a decolonial framework. According to Devika

Chawla & Ahmet Atay (2018), a decolonial framework focuses on the experiences of "in-betweenness, nostalgia, homelessness" and lack of belonging (p. 5). TCIs often encounter these feelings of rootlessness and diaspora as they grow up moving from one country to the next.

In decolonizing autoethnography, I build on Anzaldúa (2007) concept of linguistic terrorism – where English is the oppressor and other languages the oppressed. In this chapter, I challenge linguistic terrorism through my narratives as I code-switch between English and Spanish. I let the fire of my Spanglish prose burn walls that seek to keep them in. My border tongue developed itself naturally, one that I taunt within this paper to be cut - as it will not be tamed. My words are my language, made from my experiences, my travels - and to have them silenced because they are not the norm makes me ask:

> For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 77)

***

Act I: ¿De donde eres?[2.1]?

Donde comenzó todo[2.2], 2017 (en los Estados Unidos)

I stare at the blank word document glowing on my computer screen. My eyes peel towards the assignment instructions, "Answer the questions Who are you? And "Where are you from?" My fingers lay lightly on top of my keyboard. I stare at the letters, hoping that words will emerge from my fingertips, connecting them with a click and a clack of the keys. Yet, nothing comes out. My mind is blank. Sighing, I look up to the ceiling, baffled by my inability to not have a concrete answer by my junior year of college. Maybe I am putting too much pressure on myself

to write a string of words to make an inevitable sentence. Poetry came easier to me. And so, I wrote, and here is what came out:

Where are you from?

This question may seem a quick answer for some, but for me, it carries a range full of emotions

How do I respond? Do I state the place my family and I have lived for six years now?

Or do I state all the countries that I have lived in throughout my life?

But Who Am I?

Describing myself is like trying to build a puzzle of a thousand pieces

It is hard

It is consuming

But all in all, it is mostly frustrating

In society's eyes, I am seen as a white American

In my dad's eyes, I am an American Paraguayita

In the eyes of all the survey's I have ever taken, I am seen as Hispanic and white

But back to, "Where are you from?"

The answer is, I do not know

The answer is

The answer is, I am still trying to figure that out.

But what I do know is that

I am the daughter of a diplomat who had the privilege of living around the world her whole life.

I was born in Asuncion, Paraguay, and since then, I have lived in Mauritius (which is an island off the coast of Madagascar), Peru, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic.

What I do know is that

I know that in society's eyes, I am a white American female.

I am seen as such because of my light skin.

I am seen as such because of my appearance.

I am seen as such because of the way I speak English.

I know my privilege, and I know where I am marginalized.

But I also understand how intersectionality comes into play, gives me power

But even though I am light-skinned and am regarded as white, I am Hispanic

it is an identity that I own, what makes me, me.

Not that it has been easy being me.

Whenever I tell people that I am Hispanic

They gasp. They gawk. They grin.

And they say, "Yeah, right."

But what do they know?

They do not know that I was born in a Hispanic country.

I am proud of being Hispanic.

Or am I?

I am afraid of speaking out and correcting people when they categorize me as a "White American".

It is an unconscious decision

I was considered as such until I think back to my first memory in an institution.

This was during kindergarten in Lima, Peru.

There I was considered "Gringa" or "American."

And I played along

Not that being "American" put me in the dominant group.

I was not considered the "norm" abroad.

My "Americanness" and me being "Hispanic" always classified me as

part of the subordinate group.

In the United States, things were not any easier.

Sure, I was considered “white,” but I was not “American enough.”

My experiences made me different.

A never-ending cycle of not being a part of a category.

So, I stopped correcting others, and I pause when trying to answer the question of

“Where are you from?”

Why?

Because I am still trying to answer the question

“Who Am I?”

I finally did it. I made my leap into the giant unknown. I put my feelings into words and coherent sentences. I skim back through each letter; my lips curve upward, smirking, then I pause. Am I sure I am Hispanic? I mean, surely, I must be if I have been categorized as such. As I look into the difference between Hispanic and Latino/a, I realize I have been categorizing myself wrong this whole time. I read, “Hispanic is basically based on whether you or your family speak Spanish,” while “Latino focuses more on geographic location, that being Latin America” (Moreno, 2016).

Diache[2.3]

Act II: Roots

Abuelita, 1998 (en el Paraguay)

Ella cantó con sus manos en la mía haciéndoles aplaudir en un movimiento circular

♫ *~Los pollitos dicen pio pio pio.*

Cuando tienen hambre, cuando tienen frio

La gallina busca

El maiz y el trigo

Les da la comida

Y les presta abrigo

Bajos sus dos alas

Acurrucaditos

Duermen los pollitos

Hasta el otro dia~♬

Poco sabía que esta sería su última vez antes de que pudiera ver a su nieta de nuevo. Cinco años después para ser exactos. Para entonces, se formaría una barrera del idioma. Pero por ahora, el tiempo parecía detenerse mientras la abuela cantaba a la niña[2.4].

The little one on her lap chuckled, stared back, and smiled, not having a clue of what was said Tears formed in her eyes as the words *te amo* left her lips while a minuscule hand placed itself gently on her cheek.

Recollections of Mainumby the hummingbird, 2000 (en el Paraguay)

¿Porque no le estas enseñando español Roberto? ¡Ella no nos puede entender[2.5]!

The small figure in the corner watches the two bicker, confused at the words sprouting from their mouths. Only understanding the last phrase. Robert – papá. Español – Spanish. The humidity in the air latches onto her skin, the foreign words spinning in her head, trying to grasp their meaning.

¡Ella es paraguaya[2.6]!

¡Si lo se[2.7]!

¿Qué dirá su mamá[2.8]?

Que se quede aquí Robert. Con su familia[2.9].

Mind racing, pausing, confused, the child mulls over the words. Attempting to try them out. Savor them. Nevertheless, they were meaningless at the time. Yet time would aid in their formation.

Mainumby[2.10] catches her eye as her tiny legs pitter-patter down the hallway echoing through the house chasing the flapping creature. The two adults turn to sound, to the bird

Dejale no mas[2.11], let the child chase after Mainumby

a faint smile forms on their faces watching the child run after it

as the walls echoed

Que se quede aqui Robert[2.12]

***

It was not until I was older that I realized how mi papá had a choice to leave me with my grandparents in Paraguay. When my mom passed due to complications during labor, I was all he had, yet many of my family members thought he could not handle taking care of me while living abroad. I am grateful he chose to take me with him. I say this even though I could not connect with my Paraguayan roots in doing so. Arguably, I came to better understand and engross myself with my Latin American roots and culture through living in la República de Peru, la República de Honduras, y la República Dominicana. However, as the saying goes, "every action has an equal and opposite reaction." My father was not Paraguayan, so how was I to know what it meant to be a Paraguayan? That question still haunts me to this day. An answer I perhaps will never know or never get to know.

Maybe I was not meant to know.

Preguntas[2.13], 2013 (en los Estados Unidos)

Skin touches the paper fingertips tracing through the options provided in the box

Hey apa, what do I check regarding race and ethnicity?

White and Hispanic.

Wait really? I am Hispanic?

No one told me about my light-skin, about the privileges and value that it brought to the world. As Moraga (2015), "everything about my upbringing (at least what occurred on a conscious level) attempted to bleach me of what color I have" (p. 23).

Yeah, look at you, light-skin, and you're Paraguayan.

But I am American?

Yes, you have American citizenship, but you were born in Paraguay, ergo, making you Paraguayan.

Oh. But it says Hispanic/Latino/a; what's the difference between Hispanic and Latino/a?

There is none.

Shrugging, I started to fill out the respective boxes, unquestioning his response.

Little did I know he was wrong about the fact that there are no differences. But I would not learn that till much later[2.14].

Act III: Attempting to belong

Colegio[2.15], 2006 (en el Peru)

As my body sinks in the seat of the bus, my body jostles due to the uneven roads

Undeterred, I kept practicing the few words I'd learned.

¿Hola, que tal? Estoy aprendiendo el español

I repeat and repeat and repeat the phrases in my head

I understand Spanish *Solo necesito practicar*[2.16]

Granted, I picked up what I did learn from listening in to conversations between my relatives and papá)

My mouth enunciating each syllable in a whisper so no one would hear

The bus stops and

Raising my head to look out the window, uniformed kids swarm to fill the aisle

My eyes glance at my blue sweatpants and white polo too big for my small figure

Shoulders shrug I'm in no rush as I watch them flood out towards the stairs leading down to class

New school jitters keep me frozen

Legs force my body to move, and clutching my bag, I follow the swarm of students into the classroom.

Crisscrossed on the floor, legs aching to change positions, their hands mindlessly play around with the carpet beneath them. Clase hoy temenos un nuevo estudiante. Eyes dart to me full of curiosity, mouths hesitant to make the first salutation.

I long for my body to be a mirror to reflect their eyes onto something else someone else

I looked down to see what they saw me, a tiny, light-skinned appearing white human with my hair cut by my father, who placed a bowl on my head as an outline. He did that since I can remember. My fingertips touch the edge of my glasses pushing them up a bit to prevent them from falling. *I wonder if they see my fear if they can smell it they are staring at me like wolves do when they see their prey*

The words "¿Hola, que tal?" whispered out of my lips and into existence. Gasps filled the air. A quizzical look came about their faces; I did not understand why because wasn't the teacher speaking Spanish – *was the word they'd been practicing said incorrectly* –

***

As a light skin Latinx individual, I find that my body creates dissonance. To this day, when I say I am Latinx, I receive skeptic glances. My ability to understand and respond in Spanish catches those who speak it off guard. *Maybe I need to start wearing a pin that says, "I am Latinx" or "I am from Paraguay." Perhaps I need to start carrying my birth certificate around to legitimize my Latinx identity. But even if I did, does speaking the language and vehemently stating that one is from where they say there are? What makes someone a Paraguayan? What makes someone an American?*

As I reflect upon this moment, I realize that colorism is a huge issue of contention in Latin America (Tatum, 1997). Colorismo due to colonialismo. Sé que mi abuela es parte Rusa y parte Guaraní[2.17]. Si eso es el caso ¿qué la hace más paraguaya que yo? ¿Que hace a un paraguayo? ¿Qué hace a un Latino Americano? ¿Es el lenguaje? ¿La cultura? ¿Los gestos[2.18] ? Si eso es el caso, pues. Hablo español. Me encanta comer comida paraguaya, como las empanadas. También tomo tereré. Pero parece que no importa que como, como hablo, la gente todavía no me cree. ¿Qué más quieren de mí? ¿Mi sangre? ¿Mi prueba de ADN[2.19]?

Todavía no lo he averiguado[2.20]

Chica nueva[2.21], 2009 (en la República Dominica)

I walk into my new school in yet another country. Shaky breaths emit from my lungs as I drag my valise full of notebooks and books. My parents did not have enough time to buy me a backpack before my first day of classes. I keep my head down and quickly walk to the band room, dragging the valise quickly, so no one sees. I throw the valise onto the ground, and quickly grab the stuff for the day and jog to class. As I enter the classroom, eyes stare at me once again. Scanning the room, I find a seat. As I walk towards the open seat, I can feel the eyes of everyone burning through the back of my neck.

The life cycle of a diplo-brat.

Recess comes around, and I try to reach out to people.

I walk to a group of people speaking Spanish, but before they can utter a word, the group turns away, muttering,

¿Qué hace la chica nueva[2.22]?

I can understand you, you know.

Sighing, I walk towards another group of white students.

Can I join you?

Do you know the Jonas Brothers?

No.

The group leaves.

Leaving them alone, hands bone-white clenching books ever so tight, holding in the tears

It doesn't matter how many times I move to a new place, trying to belong

doesn't get any easier.

No soy loca[2.23], 2007 (en la República de Honduras)

Que hago yo en este cuerpo que el mundo no le da cuenta[2.24]

Trato de hablar con otros en español, pero mi miran como loca[2.25]

I try English

They laugh

No puedo ganar en este juego[2.26]

Y pues aquí me siento[2.27]

Con mi sándwich en mano[2.28]

Solita[2.29]

***

Se sentía que no podía encajar en ningún lado. Pero a pesar de que no podía ser parte del grupo que hablaba español, cuando los white people me permitieron acercarme, me excluyeron por no saber lo que parecía ser una referencia cultural obvia. Honestamente, esa referencia sonaba muy raro[2.30].

Act IV: Struggling

Vete de aquí[2.31], 2013 (en los Estados Unidos)

"Just go back to Paraguay where you came from."

As those words escaped the lips of my stepparent– my body winces. I feel wounds opening up, skin tearing apart as if hoping the newly rejuvenated skin could grow back – my mouth not ready to utter a comeback.

Mi papá tells her to shut up. That I belong here. With "us." With "the family."

But what does that even mean? Family. Familia.

I never felt like part of what he meant by "the family." Sure, I smiled in family photos, but I was an outsider. Every time papá left those doors; my stepparent would make sure I knew how much pain and suffering I brought to papá. That I was the reason for the death of mi mamá. That she chose to have me – that by choosing me – she passed away. That I might as well be dead too. That I could make it easier on everyone by simply leaving. Her words etched themselves onto the canvas that was my skin. I realize every breath I breathed was one my mamá could not take again, one she sacrificed—a burden I carried and still carry.

I carry that burden – despite therapists, friends, and family reassuring me that it was not my fault. I carry the burden of Paraguay. More than a country, more than a place but an alma, a soul, a

being. One that my stepparent wanted to erase from me. As they'd pull my ears to have me listen, sometimes I wondered if they were trying to take my skin off and give me one that did not reek of Paraguay, of mamá. Growing up, I obliged and tried to brush away so I could be seen favorably through my stepparent's eyes. I did it for their approval because, as they would say, "No one good comes out of Paraguay" – tainting the way I viewed the country.

I couldn't ask mi papá about Paraguay because I could see mi papá wince whenever I did. I knew that the utterance of the word brings pain, the pain of the past, the pain of lost love, pain that I know he is trying to subdue. But how else was I supposed to learn about mamá, about her life? About Paraguay?

I wish she were here to tell me herself.

Tratando[2.32], 2014 (en los Estados Unidos)

I was sitting in AP Spanish, lead scribbling down as fast as my muscles could muster. Homework ready to submit next to me. Memories come in from the night before.

> ¡Mira es casi las diez de la noche y no vas a dormir hasta lo termines[2.33]!
>
> ¡Pero no sé qué escribir! Creí que entendí que el libro estaba diciendo, pero parece que no[2.34].

The torment of writing this paper took everything in me. A constant back and forth between my papá and stepparent. To the point where it was almost midnight. A reminder that I wasn't a native Spanish speaker. That although I was quite fluent, this class was a constant reminder that I was not a true Paraguayan. Nor was I a true American. I did not know the terminology; I was passing by. *Who was I to the Latinx community if I couldn't understand a simple short story without a Spanish to English dictionary? Who was I to the U.S. if I mispronounced words and did not understand their idioms? Who was I to the Latinx community*

if I was just a light-skinned American citizen who might've lived their whole life in Latin American countries yet was a disgrace to them all at the same time for not keeping up with their culture(s)?

A tug between two worlds

Act V: Coming to terms

Abriendo puertas[2.35], 2013 (en los Estados Unidos)

Tailbone aching, leg bouncing almost uncontrollably. My hand tightens around the pencil homework staring back. Waiting for them to leave for their errands. I hear shoes being put on and laces being tied. The screen door creaks open and then slam; the family left to run errands

Finally

One-minute passes. Then two. Then 10. The coast is clear.

The last words you remember hearing from the argument before echo in my mind

Go back to Paraguay where you belong

My body moves down the basement stairs. Straight for the back room where lie bins and papers of untold treasures. *You're on a mission*. *You're searching for something of hers de mamá*. Gravity buckles knees to the ground rug burning them in the process. Hands start to pick at the stacks of paper apart, begging for something that papá kept of hers but forgot. He never talks about her. He just keeps reminding me to be proud of being Paraguayan. *But what does that even mean if he never talks about mamá*?

I'm tired of years and years of guessing of who she was of staring at the only picture mi papá has given me of hers in a locket stored under my pillow, praying that she'll visit me in my dreams

As fingers glance through the pages, you find poems. Her poems. I see it I see her name written neatly on each of their pages as if saying hola hijita. A tear forms. *Lo hiciste*[2.36]

A smile forms as eyes start reading.

The first words etched are "Soy Paraguaya…."

Yes, you were mamá.

As my eyes read on and my body fills with warm happiness, fills with joy as you skim through the way her words talk about her home. *So Paraguay isn't a horrid place afterall –*

I realize then that I should be proud to be Paraguayan too. Despite having that identity blurred out, pushed so far deep within that the weight in your chest seems less heavy now. Despite all the horrible things your stepmom said about Paraguay as a country threatening to send you back where you belonged when you did not know where you belonged,

mamá's words brought light to the darkness. Her words are providing solace within the battlefield within. Words that encourage me to seek out more. To bring her back into my life. To stop shutting her out.

Te extraño mamá. I miss you

Complicado[2.37], 2019 (en los Estados Unidos)

One day I found myself rereading her poems. Tracing my fingertips on the words mi *mamá* once typed on a typewriter. That same day, I wrote the following in a journal I kept hidden near my bed,

My body is complicated

My blood churns with the memories of those before me

I am the flesh of a line of bodies that led me to exist

I wish I could meet them all

Hablar con todos[2.38]

I own que soy Paraguaya

I own que soy Estadounidense

Soy los dos[2.39]

Sin fronteras[2.40]

Sin crossroads

I define them as they come

It is how I introduce myself

And I identify as Latinx

Y nadie me va a parar[2.41].

Seeing mamá otra vez[2.42], 2018 (en el Paraguay)

The car rolled into the graveyard, grass growing the brightest of greens. The sun is glowing through the leaves of the trees, the shadows dancing in the wind. Mi abuelo y tio in the front seat. Me in the back.

Door opens. Stepping out eyes, watch the plaques on the ground. Names etched on every one.

Feet move begrudgingly through the field *no se si estoy lista* *am I ready?*

And then

I see it

I see *her*

Water fills my eyes, knees buckle to the ground with a loud *thump*

My hands gently placing themselves on la tierra. Water drops fall from my cheeks.

Land and water meeting

I whisper,

"Mamá? I'm here. I'm home."

Reflexiones[2.43], 2020 (en los Estados Unidos)

I used to not tell people where I was from. I'd just say "the United States" and say nothing more. It was easier that way. It was better than going to my memorized response, "I was actually born in Paraguay and because my dad is a former diplomat we have lived in Mauritius, Peru, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic." This response then leads to "Oh, that means you speak Spanish." Like yes, Jenna, I speak Spanish. "Tell me something in Spanish."

¿Qué quieres que te diga[2.44]?

Oh, my you don't have a gringa accent. *No, Martha, I do not*. Thank you for noticing.

"I wouldn't have ever guessed you could speak Spanish; you look so white."

Muscles clench as veins pulse with the blood boiling in frustration.

Despite passing, my body is always a battleground. My flesh is constantly up for debate. Latin American or white. But never ascribed at the same time. Yet both avowed. I have come to realize that I will never not pass as white. And on the flip side, my body will never be read as Latinx, as Paraguayan. I am in the process of coming to terms with that. Doing so, I find myself voicing my Paraguayan roots to those I meet, making sure that they do not misidentify me. That they know, I am Latinx. However, when I do, I am conscious of the privileges my appearing white self has. That I can speak to my experience living abroad in Latin America and advocate for Latinx rights in the United States as well as globally, but I never want to speak "for" anyone. I want to continue to embrace this Nepantla space to transform how I view my own identity and how others view me.

***

Curtain call

As I write this thesis, I understand that my whiteness ascertains me certain privileges my Black and Indigenous Latin American counterparts do not have the luxury of experiencing. In attempting to make sense of these stories and the experiences they represent, I do not aim at neatly or tidily harmonizing my exploration of Latinx identity. Instead, I paired the stories offered above as scenes providing glimpses of insight into an ongoing play. Such depictions explore moments in moments that have left an impact on how I articulate and come to terms with this particular intersection – that of being light skin Latinx. In featuring four acts, the stories and poems play off one another, giving myself and readers space and time to re-member, reflect, and reflexively come to terms with my ascribed whiteness and avowed Latin American identity.

ACT I, “Roots,” suggests the difficulties of identifying as a specific identity when the memories of that place are scarce and only uncovered through marking one’s demographic in questionnaires, forms that end up reducing/erasing a range of identities by their limited number of boxes to check. In this act, I attempt to showcase how little time I spent with my family in Paraguay due to my father’s position as a U.S. diplomat. And how in traveling, I never really questioned my identity as saying that I was from the U.S. was the most straightforward answer to give and never really received any contesting responses that would force me to think otherwise. That is until I had to fill out the form.

In ACT II, “Attempting to Belong,” I become the proverbial “elephant in the room.” My body is placed under heavy fire as my experiences showcase where I felt like I stood out and instantly did not belong. In such situations, I felt as though I was walking on a tightrope, uncertain as to whether or not I had a right to claim myself as white and/or Latinx. And how in attempting to belong, neither demographic accepted me with open arms: just stares and confused looks. An essential similarity that these narratives engage in, that external interactions may never have such “elephant” status get any easier.

ACT III, “Struggling,” sheds light on how I felt like an imposter to my heritage. For instance, in reflecting on how I grew up thinking about Paraguay from familial silence and negative stories while also my qualms in learning Spanish, it became clear that the feeling of not being accepted or having to prove oneself was based on external evidence. In other words, in how others reacted indirectly toward and directly with, that suggested a lack of acceptance/welcoming from others (at least without having “proven” one’s self-worth). The scenes in this act go onto discussing the uncertainty of claiming myself as Latinx. I felt like an imposter to my own heritage. My own bloodline. That regardless of where I was, I was an

outsider. An outsider who hid under the safety of privilege. To “fit in” in some ways, but potentially at the expense of demonstrating belonging with my Latinx identity.

Finally, in ACT IV, “Coming to terms,” the journey comes in a full circle. I explore the proverbial can of worms that I have opened in this storytelling to account for myself and those in my family. If such opportunities exist, they exist in necessarily long-form, as no combination of 140 or 280 characters will illuminate my experience as Latinx yet passing/existing presumptively as white. In this section, I offer a pause for readers to join me on my voyage of coming to terms with my Latinx identity. I am forced to acknowledge my ways of adapting – in both silences as well as trial and error. How my attempts to pass to survive were futile. Judged in their proximities. Blows to my very sense of belonging. A belonging I start to wonder if I will ever feel. A belonging I wonder if I am meant to understand—nevertheless, one I want to continue to unpack. Moreover, the presumptive Whiteness is such that my body could be read as completely white or non-Latinx.

I end the current chapter with two main ideas to consider. First, because of the cultural, institutional, economic, social, and interpersonal privileges afforded by being presumed to be white, I understand that the decision of whether to seek out one’s Latinx roots and whether or not to share them with others in a way that subverts their expectations that I am Latinx is already itself a privilege. When looking and/or sounding, Latinx may already render someone as suspicious or as an alien body; most Latinx community members do not have the luxury of choosing whether to assume such risk.

Second, because of the continued substantial growth of Latinx populations living in the United States, there are likely to be many others who will share, though not identically, some of the challenges we offer here. I hope that this thesis may provide at least some potential resources

for, if not a usable pathway forward for them, at least a reminder that they are not going through this independently. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter One, I do not want to map this framework onto other experiences precisely. However, it seems like there are several different racial/ethnic identity categories where individuals may face similar challenges, as well as any number of other potentially marginalized identity categories where those who might pass may also be exploring how they can do so in a way that resonates with how they see and understand themselves. In writing this, I am not trying to make my voice paramount to non-white Latinx voices. I just want it to be known that we are out there. I am here in solidarity. And I am working to untangle the safety net I have entrapped myself in to survive. To be with you. Work on racial and ethnic passing is not done. It will never be done. And for those who are white-passing, accountability of identifying with whiteness is paramount.

I return to these Acts and critical ideas concerning passing in Conclusion (Chapter Four).

[2.1] Where are you from?
[2.2] Where it all began.
[2.3] Damn
[2.4] Little did she know that this would be the last time she'd see her grandchild again. Five years to be exact. By then a language barrier would form. But for now, time seemed to stop while the grandmother sang to the girl.
[2.5] Why aren't you teaching her Spanish Robert? She cannot understand us!
[2.6] She is Paraguayan!
[2.7] Yes, I know!
[2.8] What would her mom say?
[2.9] Have her stay Robert. With her family.
[2.10] Mainumby is part of a legend within the native Guaranis of Paraguay, where Mainumby is a hummingbird seen to be the bringer of good spirits and happiness
[2.11] Let her be.
[2.12] Have her stay.
[2.13] Questions.
[2.14] Here I reference my first act, that of Act I.
[2.15] School
[2.16] I just need to practice
[2.17] I know my grandma is part Russian and part indigenous (Guaraní)
[2.18] If that is the case what makes her more Paraguayan than me? What makes a Paraguayan? And for that matter what makes a Latin American? Is it the language? The culture? The mannerisms?
[2.19] If that's the case, then. I speak Spanish. I love to eat Paraguayan food, like empanadas. I also like to drink terere. But it doesn't seem to matter what I eat, what I speak, people still don't believe me. What more do they want from me? My blood? My DNA test?
[2.20] I have yet to find out.
[2.21] New girl
[2.22] What is the new girl doing?
[2.23] I am not crazy.
[2.24] What do I do with this body in a world that does not notice it.
[2.25] I try to talk to others in Spanish, but they look at me like I am crazy.

[2.26] I cannot win this game.
[2.27] And well, I'll just sit here.
[2.28] Sandwich in hand.
[2.29] By myself.
[2.30] It felt like I could not catch a break. Although I could not be a part of the group that spoke Spanish, when I was allowed to get closer to the white people, they excluded me because I did not know a "obvious" cultural reference. Honestly, the reference sounded weird.
[2.31] Get out of here.
[2.32] Trying.
[2.33] Look, it is almost ten pm and you won't sleep until you are done!
[2.34] But I do not know what to write! I thought I understood what the book was saying, but it seems that I don't.
[2.35] Opening doors.
[2.36] You did it.
[2.37] Complicated.
[2.38] Talk with everyone.
[2.39] I am both.
[2.40] Without borders.
[2.41] And no one is going to stop me.
[2.42] Seeing my mom again.
[2.43] Reflections.
[2.44] What do you want me to say?

CHAPTER THREE: MANTENIENDO EL FUEGO

My eyes stare at the Frida Kahlo candle, mesmerized by how the flame dances around the wick. Even without a fan blowing, without a breeze of oxygen driving it, the flame goes on and thrives. The little vial in my hand feels heavy. I open my hand, palm faced up as I read "Testosterone Cypionate Injection." I wrap my fingers around the vial and let it roll between my fingertips. The clear honey-like liquid swirls around as I continue rolling it back and forth. I am mesmerized that this liquid that I inject into my upper thigh every week brings me solace. It brings me the motivation to get up in the morning. It brings me relief. I put the vial down and pick up my phone. As I scroll through Twitter, a headline catches my eye, reading, "Another trans individual murdered." Her name was Shakiie Peters. It seems like every other week, I find out about another member of LGBTQIQAP+ communities murdered. Wax starts to pool around the ignited wick. The flame continues to dance as I see their faces:

Dana Martin

Ellie Marie Washtok

Brianna "BB" Hill

Itali Marlowe

Ja'Leyah-Jamar

Bee Love Slater

Bailey Reeves

Tracy Single

Bubba Walker

Pebbles La Dime Doe

Kiki Fantroy

Denali Berries Stuckey

Brooklyn Lindsey

Zoe Spears

Chanel Scurlock

Chynal Lindsey

Paris Cameron

Michelle “Tamika” Washington

Muhlaysia Booker

Claire Legato

Ashanti Carmon

Jazzaline Ware

Layleen Polanco

Johana “Joa” Medina Leon

Roxsana Hernandez

Dustin Parker

Tony McDade

I let out a painful sigh. All of these names are of trans and gender non-conforming individuals in the U.S. who have been murdered in 2019. 91% of them were Black; 81% were under 30 years old; and 68% lived in the South (Human Rights Campaign, 2019). We have already witnessed the murder of 39 trans and gender non-conforming individuals in 2020. Every day I hear another name being added to the never-ending list. Yet, these are only the ones that we know about.

What about the people whose deaths have been silenced? What about those who are missing? Is their death real? Did they matter?

The U.S. currently faces a national epidemic of anti-transgender violence. An epidemic only found through a tweet or a news article found only in a Google search.

Our lives have not warranted front-page news. They have never warranted the U.S.'s full attention or attention at all.

The only time this country seemed to listen was at Stonewall and the Supreme Court case Bostock v. Clayton County.

How many lives must be lost for our right to live? For my right to live.

I stare at the vial of testosterone. I think back to *Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Lili Elbe, Christine Jorgensen, Lucky Hicks Anderson,* and *Renee Richards*. Historic transwomen whose actions have led to the domino of advancements that I have the privilege of having today. From hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to top surgery. I will not let their efforts be silenced nor in vain.

My eyes glance towards the candle as I think to myself, *please let me live to see another day*

Closing my eyes, I blow, watching the flame fight for another breath, and then die out.

***

In this chapter, I provide an autoethnographic examination that focuses primarily on gender passing, particularly related to my journey from identifying as a female to nonbinary to a trans male. Thus, in the narratives that follow, I will use "she/her," "they/them," and "he/him" pronouns, respectively. As with Chapter Two, I organize the current chapter and its stories in terms of the play metaphor. Conceptually speaking, as mentioned in Chapter One, the chapter

orients to the term "passing" as the continuous conscious and sometimes unconscious attempt and ability by an individual of one group to be effortlessly identified as a member of a different cultural or identity group. Sparked by José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) notion of aspirational future queerness, Judith Butler's (1998) theory of gender performativity, and Butler's (2009) position that gender performances are precarious, I use episodic personal narratives to reflectively and reflexively understand the nature of gender passing as it relates to my identity. In thinking about gender passing, I ask, *how is gender passing central to survival? To resistance? How is gender passing precarious?*

The concept of "queer time" is another driving force in this chapter. I define queer time as the interruption of the uncontested, dominant linear progression of time (Halberstam, 2011). Further, queer time understands the present as both implicated by the past while at the same time shaped by the future. Moreover, the past and future start to blur into the present, where the future is now. Following LD Mattson's (2020) definition, "Queer futurism is looking forward when it is too painful to stay looking at the present and past. Without the hope of a better, queerer future, there is no hope to survive the present long enough to get there" (p. 18). For example, despite the abhorrent events the LGBTQIQAP+ community has gone through, from the Stonewall Riots, conversion therapy, and the scapegoats for the HIV epidemic, members of the LGBTQIQAP+ community need to look ahead in hopes of a better life and future for their successors.

Similarly, my vignettes are a mix of my past, present, and future, and work to demonstrate the construction and re-construction of my gender identity through queer time. In addition, the blurred timely epochs of narratives are central to my understanding of what it means to pass as a certain gender because passing is a continuous process shaped by the past, present, and future.

Tienes que luchar para vivir[3.1], 2019 (en los Estados Unidos)

The tattoo needle punctures my skin repetitively, following the lines that make up the lit matchstick design right above my right elbow. I watch how he concentrates on following the line. How simple. Tedious.

Granted, he has to do that since I am paying for a specific design.

Still, it must be nice to have a line to follow. A path to reference.

My eyes look out the window, watching the breeze blow the trees one way. Then the other. The trees seem to go wherever the wind takes them. Then, my eye catches something. One of them is pushing back, trying to go against the wind. I commend its efforts. I will it to keep fighting. But the wind is too powerful. And the tree follows the rhythm of the others.

"Done"

I look down, staring at the newly lit match.

I chose it as a reminder to not let my flame die out. To keep fighting.

But to what end?

***

While I wrote the narratives that make up this chapter, I wondered how I would be able to perform and reconcile with the physical and internal tension and exhaustion that results from being vulnerable. I wondered how I could articulate my identity and explain my experiences in a way that would be understood. As in Chapter Two, I use the dramaturgical approach to have my narratives converse with one another to reflect and introspect on the past, present, and futures of my own identity; I am mindful of the precarity of memory. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Bochner (2007) addresses the faultiness and slipperiness of memory work. Like Chapter Two, I address the precarious nature of my memory by using italics throughout my vignettes to indicate

my own reflexive thought process while also using quotation marks around the fictionalized character's possible dialogue. In practicing reflexivity, a crucial practice in most research and writing that uses autoethnography, I aim to stay mindful that the ways I re-tell my stories do not imply that the events happened *precisely* in the ways I describe them. Autoethnography is an inherently (inter)subjective methodology. Further, in making memories into words, I realize that I must go about writing "honestly, introspectively, reflexively, and without fear" so that the audience can gain access to my perspective, and thus, put themselves into my shoes (Minge & Zimmerman, 2013, p. 49). I write in these ways to create the conditions for resonance (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

***

Act I: Playing the part

Cambiar[3.2], 2012 (en los Estados Unidos)

I move to the United States during my sophomore year of high school, as a scrawny peach colored acne ridden metal mouthed girl, standing amongst my clear faced, pale, blue eyed counterparts. My dark brown hair contrasts against the blonde. I feel grotesque. I do not fit the white-blond mold. My bony body seems so fragile amongst the hefty muscular girls before me. Soccer try-outs start soon though, maybe I'd find my place there. Little did I know how wrong I was. I walked towards the turf fields, purple long johns keeping the cold wind from scraping my skin. I am the anomaly amongst those who are wearing Under Armor. I feel left out, different, unwanted.

I glance away from their stares. Hoping somebody would approach me. My eyes look towards their blonde hair, their free from glasses faces, their smiles showing no braces.

I don't belong here.

I wanted to be wanted, I wanted to belong –

As I walked towards the sea of white girls wearing Under Armor, I realized that I could not relate to them on a cultural level (see Chapter Two) and so perhaps, I could look like them.

Later that week I find myself sitting in a Hair Cuttery seat as

the hairdresser asks what style I want. I want a change. *I need this change*. The stench of bleach burns my nostrils. My scalp burns. There is beauty in pain. Hours pass. I look up. The blonde replaces the brown. The reflection shows –

I'm like them now

Or am I?

Dejame en paz[3.3], 2013 (en los Estados Unidos)

As long as I can remember, I was different. I felt different. I looked for my dad for fashion inspiration, yet, no matter how many times I went down the stair wearing shorts and a polo shirt, my parents would send me right back upstairs to change into something more

feminine.

Their criticisms typically centered on these questions:

"Where is the makeup?"

"You forgot the lipstick?"

"Why aren't you wearing a dress?"

"This is why you are the only girl in your grade that has not been in a relationship."

I walk up the stairs, begrudgingly, looking at the articles of clothing hanging in my closet. Nothing *feminine* speaks to me. Eyes look at the dress and cardigan hanging side by side, as if they are calling me to put them on. Alluring me to play a game of dress up. My hands feel the

material, icy cold to the touch. My fingers wipe off the dust particles that have taken refuge in its crevices. Dragging the items to the bathroom, I shut the door.

As I pull on the dress over my bare shoulders, my eyes fixate on the figure staring back at me through the mirror. I did not recognize the Being (Heideger, 1996). The cardigan cloth covering the burgundy dress has a pattern of red roses and green leaves. *Gross*. The look just feels wrong. My thoughts swirl as I think about the fact that this is how someone who was assigned female at birth is supposed to dress. I look back into my closet at the flannels, the jeans, the items from the men's section from the thrift stores. *Comfort*. I long to take off this outfit and go back to the comfort of my regular clothes.

Sigh

"Look at how pretty she looks!"

"I know!" *Did I not look pretty before?*

"With the blonde hair, make-up all of it - she look so *beautiful*."

Beautiful. I repeat the word in my head, letting it rest - I don't feel beautiful. I thought that by performing more I would feel more at home with myself. Instead I want a sculptor to smash my bones and rearrange them so I can be handsome.

"Best you have ever looked!"

For you. Best I have ever looked for you. But for me? I'm slowly dying inside this rotting corpse the lines painted on in hopes for a masterpiece. I'm a Barbie, picturesque on the outside, empty and dead on the inside. I long to belong.

"It's better than what you were wearing prior"

What do you mean? I felt at home in my own body with those clothes. They hid my curves and my bulging chest. They hid everything I despised. I just wasn't feminine enough for you then, and

now I'm the doll you always wanted to create. The doll you wanted to have play the part that you created within your head. The doll you wanted as a child. The doll your parents wouldn't buy for you, so you decided to build it yourself with me.

And I let you.

No me entendistes[3.4], 2021 (en los Estados Unidos)

The relationship between a stepparent and a child is often tumultuous. Even volatile. Despite any attempt of the biological parent to try to build bridges between both parties, it is often impossible to mix water and oil. Looking back at my interactions with my stepparent, I realize that we just did not understand each other. Perhaps we never will. I never fit into the mold of "femininity." My go-to outfit was a pair of baggy sweat shorts and a Cookie Monster t-shirt or jeans and a flannel shirt. I never cared about how others saw me. Instead I dressed solely for my pleasure and my comfort. I hated wearing dresses, skirts, blouses, anything that showed the bulges on my chest and my curves. I did not value, nor did I care much for dressing like a "girly girl." I liked dressing androgynously and more on the masculine end. However, my disdain for dressing "girly" created dissonance for with my stepparent, which placed me in precarious situations that inevitably turned into arguments. They grew up knowing that society had two sexes, female and male. And because I was assigned female at birth, therefore I had to follow the feminine rule book. They thought that by not following the societal expectations of what it meant to be feminine something must have been wrong with me. To them, it meant that I was not paying attention to my looks. To them, because I did not pay attention to my looks, I had low self-esteem. To them, one's looks made a clear statement: "I am fucking worthy." To them, my go-to outfit sent the message that I was lazy and needed psychological support.

However, their evaluations were the opposite of what I needed. I needed someone to support me. To see that okay, this person does not like to dress femininely, so how can I help style them appropriately. To cater to my likes.

Granted, at the time maybe I should have voiced my concerns and hurt, no? But how do you voice something with which you are not even familiar? How do you voice something about a problem for which you do not yet have the words? If only I had access to the LGBTQIQAP+ community and resources to help me vocalize what I was feeling then, maybe my relationship with my stepparent would have been and/or perhaps be smoother. But how do you come to terms with how you are supposed to perform a certain gender and not relating to said gender? How do you dress the gender you want to dress and not be placed in a situation where you are forced out of said attire so that you are seen favorably by loved ones?

Maybe it was all just a big misunderstanding.

Compras[3.5], 2017 (en los Estados Unidos)

The mall space is quite heteronormative. The clear distinction between gender binaries creates a sense of limitation of choice. Body quivers at the towering sign WOMEN'S SECTION.

Checking for the coast to be clear, weird looks stare me down as my feet tip toe towards the men's sections smiling at the options for me. I'm home.

My hand reaches for the first button down as I feel a hand grip my arm. I turn. My cousin looks at me and says, "That isn't your section."

What right-How-Why-Who is she to tell me what-water fills my eyes.

Wiping the water streams before she can, I force a smile at the beige cardigan she is holding for me with a matching black tank top. Clutching the two, dragging my feet towards the fitting room. I wish for the items to burn in my hands so I would not have to wear them. Instead, the

fabric tightens its grip on my hands, dragging me to the stalls and pushing me into dressing femininely. To fit into the societal role for my assigned female at birth body.

As I put on the items, the clothes start to suffocate me. The long sleeves squeeze my arms, forcing myself to pose as all the other girls did. *Think like a sorority girl*. Taking one deep breath, I open the stall door, pose, and watch as my cousin's eyes glisten with pride, envy – "You look stunning."

Am I not stunning outside of these clothes? Am I only stunning if I belong?

Forcing a smile, I cough up a thank you – slamming the door

I stare at my reflection and the tears start to fall.

I just want to be me.

But what does that mean anymore

I can't breathe in this.

Soy una dama de honor[3.6], 2018 (en los Estados Unidos)

My feet dangle as I sit on a desk chair with wheels on the highest setting. Makeup being put on my face. The other bridesmaids walk up to me and ask if I would think about wearing shoes that were not the Converse I was currently wearing. As they asked, they took out an extra pair of high heel shoes that they brought. I politely shake my head to say no. Little did they know that the converse were my little acts of resistance against compulsory femininity on my cousin's wedding day. Before they could ask another question, or try to tie me into their girl talk, my head turned towards the hairstylist who asks,

"How would you like your hair done?"

Earlier I tried to listen to what the other bridesmaids' preferences were, but the words they used were, to me, foreign and strange territory.

A territory in which I did not want to venture; but here I was, sitting and looking like a doll, dressing the part. For my cousin. I force a smile as I reply,

"Whatever you think is best."

Performing a certain gender favorably meant being seen favorably.

Interlude: Him

Baño[3.7],en la República Dominicana, 2010

My hand reaches for the faucet, turning the water on. Streams of water cover my hands as I reach the soap dispenser. "Sir you are in the wrong bathroom" I turn my head towards the voice, I hesitate, and before I have the chance to respond

"Oh sorry, I thought you were"

I smile awkwardly uttering "It's okay"

But what I really wanted to say,

You were right

Ordenando en Chipotle[3.8], 2020 (en los Estados Unidos)

"What would you like on your burrito bowl man?"

Oh, my goodness, I passed the visual gender test! He said "man." Meaning he sees me as a guy. Wait, what about me reads to him as a male? Is it my new short haircut? My clothes? My voice? It must be my voice! Geesh this is exciting because this means that after being roughly five months on HRT, my voice is starting to lower! People are reading me as a male! Thank goodness! Took them long enough. Wait, this internal monologue is going for way too long, shoot, how do I respond? Do I say, "thanks man?"

Instead of audibly replying, I lift my head up, bring my shoulders back, showcasing that I had a flat chest (brought to me by my tight fitted chest binder), and lower my voice even more as I proceed to order.

As I go down the line and am ready to pay for my meal, my roommate interjects,

"I'll pay for hers and mine."

Perplexed, I look around the room, *she cannot possibly be referring to me, she knows that I go by he/him pronouns. Please don't put me in this precarious situation* -

I then see her finger pointing at me and I watch the guy look me up and down and apologize for misgendering me.

No, no don't apologize, you didn't say anything wrong.

Act II: It is him I want to love

Ahorita no[3.9], 2014 (en los Estados Unidos)

I open my eyes to see the same figure staring back at me. My reflection begging my body to keep quiet. *It isn't safe.* You pull up the sleeve to see the scars – lines up and down your arm from the blade that you hoped would secrete the estrogen, hoping that the oxygen would notice the searing pain and supply it with testosterone. But to no avail.

You know you have to stop doing that. But you don't know how. You cannot feel anything while playing the part. Performing is tiring. I just want to dress the way I want to dress. Be who I am. Not who others want me to be. I wish it was as easy as changing the clothes on a Barbie to those of a Ken. Maybe then I could have some sort of representation to reference to when trying to explain to my parents.

Mi infancia[3.10], en Peru, 2006

Hands hold the plastic limbs of the picturesque doll as eyes wander towards the nearby miniature cars and nerf guns. The items glow as the sun beams and hits through the window, its shadows looming toward me – beckoning me to join them. I look back to Barbie in one hand, Ken in the other. Staring at her motionless eyes as they stare back at me - taunting my lack of her features. Staring at Ken's confident eyes – smiling as I longed for his muscles and good looks. My eyes dart back to where my friend left for the bathroom and seeing that the coast was clear looked back to the treasures glistening, almost sparkling by the wall –

I should stay and play with my friend – but boy do I want to experience the thrill of playing with nerf guns.

The plastic dark blue mat underneath sticks to my legs, peeling from my skin as I stand up, dropping the dolls – my back walking against the gendered expectations of my assigned femininity towards the nerf guns and cars. My friend's brother meets me with a gleam in his eye, his hand stretched out, waiting for me to high five it, welcoming me to the club. The boy club.

One…Two…Three…Four… he counts

I had to find a hiding spot, with the toy nerf gun in hand I ran into the nearest bedroom.

He was coming. My gun fully loaded, I was ready for battle. I could hear his sister calling my name, Sophie! Come back! Let's play dolls! I'll be Barbie! You'll be Ken!

No, I do not want to hide behind Ken – I want to be Ken.

As footsteps come closer, I duck into a nearby closet. A small space, but I'm like Houdini, small and skinny enough to fit anywhere. Passing, but belonging nowhere – not knowing when to

come out. Scared wondering if I will ever be found out. I whisper to myself, is it safe to come out? But a voice in my head whispers back,

shhhh, It's not safe –

I wait for him to yell "I can't find you, come out already." And so, I did, come out of my hiding place. Yet, not to tell him of my "I want to be Ken" thoughts. But because I was able to hide my secret. Perform the appropriate gender favorably to both him and his sister.

I was good at hiding.

But how much longer can I hide?

Quiero ser "El[3.11]," 2009 (en la República Dominicana)

Turf stench fills my nostrils. Eyes staring at the players on the field. All boys ranging from six to seventeen years old. I'm thirteen. Heat causes rivers of sweat to drip down my body. It's game day. I'm the only ascribed girl playing. The ball at my feet, I am ready to play. The opposing team's coach glares at me inquisitively. I need to prove my worth. I may be viewed as girl, but I can play to the level of boys. At first, the boys are tentative, and act like they do not want to hurt a girl. Anger boils through my body. I play harder. I taunt them by roughhousing against them, kicking the ball from their feet. Begging to be a part of their dance. I take the ball, feet zigzagging past one, another, kicking, scoring that'll show them. But instead of congratulations, I get gawking faces a sense of pride washes over me. Loneliness too

How desperately I want to be like them desperately wanted to be called

Him.

If only I was seen as a "him," I could be a part of the handshakes they created for one another. I wouldn't have to worry about wearing a sports bra and having said bra create that bulge which

highlights my femininity. If only I was seen as a him, if I could just pass as a him, maybe then they would treat me as an equal.

Mi nombre[3.12], 2020 (en los Estados Unidos)

I take out my cellphone and press record:

"Hi my name is Spencer and this is my voice six months on testosterone."

Clicking on the prior voice recordings I have collected in my voice memo inbox, I hear my voice dropping in real time. *Thank god*.

With every injection I take, I grow more comfortable in my body. Which has made me realize,

I have always been a boy. I am a man.

But when I say that I am a man.

Do not ask me what is in my pants. Genitalia does not equal gender identity.

Do not ask me whether I can recite the names of baseball teams.

My masculinity does not predicate on knowing those teams.

My masculinity is defined by me and me alone.

Rethink how you define masculinity. Because right now, it is fragile.

My body has always been political. My body is always on the forefront. Resisting.

I took the blunt of femininity growing up to play the part asked of me. To avoid confrontation. I would do this by wearing the dresses, skirts, blouses that was bought for me to replace my go-to outfits of a flannel and jeans. *Passing in order to survive.* Luckily, as a form of resistance, I was able to get some high-top black Doc Martens instead of wearing flats.

But now that I am away from that house,

I can finally live the way I choose.

I can finally be myself, rather than others' versions of me.

Hospital, 2020 (en los Estados Unidos)

My leg bounces up and down as I wait in the waiting area. I am almost six months on testosterone, and this is my first time in a medical building. My heart rate quickens as my mind churns up all the worst possible outcomes that could happen with me being here. I remember coming across an article that mentioned a regulation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that would "eliminate some protections for transgender patients against discrimination by clinicians, hospitals, and health insurance companies" (Cerratani, 2020, para. 1).

Will I experience discrimination? Is this hospital trans friendly? I mean, the hospital itself does have "St." in it, which I take to be Catholic or Christian, and from what I gather the Bible condemns homosexuality, so my chances are not very good.

My fingers pick at the dead fingernail which begs to be peeled off.

My birth name is yelled by a nurse and I raise my hand.

She looks at me inquisitively, double checks my wrist band, and ushers me into a nearby room.

Shoot I need to figure out when to change my name. It is not that I have avoided doing so, it's just that there are so many regulations to do so. For one you must file a name change in the state you are physically residing in and the address you are living in needs to be on your driver's license. At the moment, I am a master's student living in a different state that appears on my driver's license. So I would either have to declare residency in a place that I am unsure whether I will stay longer than two years, move back to the state on my drivers license, or declare residency in whatever state I end up in next. Decisions. Decisions. Decisions.

My thought process is interrupted by the nurse who asks,

"Are you on any medications."

Well, here goes nothing. I hope to not experience violence or discrimination for what I am about to say.

I take a deep breath and reply, "I am on testosterone."

"I see, and why are you on testosterone? Mind me asking what sex organs you have?

Yes, I do mind. But, wait, the fact that you cannot tell what I was assigned at birth must mean I look androgynous or masculine enough for you to ask. Which is good right? I mean Spence, that is what you want, to not be assumed female. To be ascribed a man.

Biting my tongue, I reply,

"I was assigned female at birth, but I am medically transitioning to be a man."

Silence.

Please do not let me experience violence, please, please…

The nurse takes a bit to gather her thoughts, when she surprises me by asking,

"If you don't mind, could I ask you some questions regarding transitioning? My child just came out to me as transgender and I want to be there for them, but I do not know where to start."

This comment took me aback. I had not expected that I would meet a parent of a child who wants to medically transition like I am in the process of doing. We had a good and effective conversation where I directed the nurse to resources that I use and recommend that she use too. As our conversation came to an end, I felt a safety blanket had been wrapped around me throughout my whole stay there. I was seen without hesitation. And while I sat on the hospital bed waiting for my results to come back, I knew I was one of the lucky ones. I think back to a report I read by the National LGBTQ Task Force (2019), which stated that out of 6,450 surveyed transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, "nearly 1 in 5 (19 percent) reported being refused care outright" because of their identity (para. 8).

Today I was one of the lucky ones.

However, I fear that one day, my luck will run out.

Querido futuro yo[3.13], 2021 (en los Estados Unidos)

As I look to my little vial of testosterone, I think back to the criticisms I received growing up about what I wore.

"Wear your contacts because your eyes are the best feature about you"

"Put on makeup"

"Do not wear a ponytail of an old woman" *Whatever that meant*

"Make an effort to dress nicely or please do us a favor: stay in your apartment alone feeling sorry about yourself."

I did feel sorry for myself.

I felt sorry for my skin growing for a body that wasn't mine.

I felt sorry for every breath I take for a conscious that felt trapped.

I longed for the day my efforts were noted.

For my looks to lessen my dysphoria.

And if that means that I become the sculptor.

So be it!

Sophia

Sophie

Soph

And as I inject myself with HRT

Spencer, Spence

I hope I can successfully pass now that I am on testosterone. I am currently eight months on HRT and I still get misgendered in public. I am not sure what about me screams "FEMALE." All I know is that I do not identify as female. HRT is a slow and agonizing process. I see small changes happening, from increased body hair to having more body heat. This is just the beginning. With every intramuscular shot that I inject myself with, I feel more comfortable in my own skin. I love who I am becoming. And I am thankful for the body and voice that brought me to this moment. I am excited for my future yet also nervous as to whether the world will accept me. I think back to all the LGBTQIQAP+ individuals we lost along the way, without them, I would not be here. I look forward to when I can get top surgery, have my chest be fully flat, and I look forward to the day my credentials match my name.

It'll take time. But one day I will get there.

I just hope mi papá can see me as a son.

And I hope the world can accept me as such.

***

Curtain call

As I attempt to make sense of these stories and the experiences they represent, I do not aim to harmonize the explorations of my gender identity and gender passing in neat and tidy ways. Instead, I pair the stories above as scenes that provide glimpses into an ongoing play, the ongoing play of my transition and its consequences. Such depictions explore moments in my life that have impacted how I articulate and come to terms with this particular intersection – that of performing to a certain gender expectation to acceptably pass. To me, I pass in acceptable ways when society views me as a cisgender man. In featuring two acts and an interlude, I aim for my

stories to play off one another; and give myself some space and time to re-member, reflect, and reflexively understand what gender passing means to me: a means of survival and resistance.

Act I, "Playing the Part," suggests gender passing as being a matter of survival. Specifically, I explore the effects and emotional turmoil that stem from performing as one's assigned gender at birth in order to survive in a household where one's genitalia equates to one's gender identity. The vignettes themselves are not perfectly symmetrical. Instead, akin to queer time, the accounts intersperse between moments in time. However, all of the scenes tackle the expectations placed and imposed on me while I tried to fit within the normative and exclusionary mold and the emotional turmoil that comes with doing so.

In the interlude, "Him," I offer a pause within my play for readers to join me on this voyage of coming to terms with my gender identity. I am forced to acknowledge my ways of adapting – in both silence and trial and error and how my attempts to survive were futile in both cases—judged in their own proximities. These are blows to my very sense of belonging. A belonging I start to doubt will ever feel read to me. A belonging I wonder if I am meant to understand. But nevertheless, I want to continue to unpack this belonging. In both cases "Baño, en la Republica Dominicana, 2010" and "Ordenando en Chipotle, en los Estados Unidos, 2020," I acceptably passed as a man. Yet, something, someone, gave me away. It is as if I was uncovered and put in a precarious situation. An uncovering I did not want or choose to experience as I am not hiding anything. I am a man, always have been. However, in one case, my physical features gave me away, and in the other, I was misgendered. These occasions continue to be common in my lived experience. The later scenes in this chapter show my want and need to be claimed as a man. However, within the second act, regardless of where I am, I continue to feel as though the world will never see me as a man. That my assigned female at birth status will

remain branded on my very being. I hate how my masculinity predicates on successfully passing as a male to ascertain safety in my assigned at female birth body. In this case, hoping the world sees me as who I am, a man.

Act II, "It is Him I Want to Love," shows my desire to be a man. In the scenes "Ahorita no" "Mi infancia," "Mi nombre," "Hospital," and "Querido futuro yo," I explore the proverbial can of worms that I open in this storytelling when trying to relay my experiences while also taking in consideration the sentiments of my family. However, despite relaying my series of narratives, there are no combinations of 140 or 280 characters that will illuminate my experiences as transmasculine and in the process of passing as such. However, in this act, I engage in a back and forth that shows me wanting to be seen as a he; however, biology and gender performance expectations continue to hinder my passing to be viewed as acceptable. Thus, in addition to the question of whether my dad would view me as his son, I have moments of joy with my voice dropping.

Trans Lives Matter. Today as I share my vignettes, I call upon readers to think about the privilege it is to live one's truth safely. I call upon you to keep the names I mentioned earlier in mind as to those who lived one's truth and found murdered. Passing is a never-ending process of survival, resistance, and moments of precarity. And this autoethnography shows the potentiality of freedom in it despite the unpredictability. And the potentiality of survival and resistance.

Ultimately, I just want it to be known that being trans should not be an automatic death sentence. We deserve to live. We should not have to add more names to the list of trans murder victims which I began this chapter. Also, I am here in solidarity and remembrance of the lives the trans community has lost. As a trans man, I am working to untangle the safety net transmen

have entrapped ourselves in, with transwomen taking the brunt of activist work for the trans community. To be with you. Our work is not done. It will never be done. I may never truly pass all the time. I may never truly understand what my trans nonbinary, trans brother, and trans sisters are going through. But I want to let it be known that you are not alone.

And let us keep the flame alive.

[3.1] You need to fight to survive.
[3.2] Change.
[3.3] Leave me alone
[3.4] You did not understand me
[3.5] Shopping
[3.6] I am a maid of honor.
[3.7] Bathroom.
[3.8] Ordering at Chipotle.
[3.9] Not right now
[3.10] My childhood.
[3.11] I want to be "him."
[3.12] My name.
[3.13] Dear future me.

CHAPTER FOUR: RECONVENING IN THE NEPANTLA

In this thesis, I have engaged with the Nepantla to explore how TCIs participate within communicative processes that involve the construction and negotiation of identity in conjunction with gender and racial passing. Doing so, I reflect on my own lived experience as a TCI through autoethnography to question, break down, and rebuild my ascribed and avowed identities. My narratives in the previous two chapters build on the premise that "identity is conflicting and problematic like the border itself" (De Los Santos Upton, 2019, p. 135).

In Chapter Two, I examine the complexities and privileges of what it means to both racially pass as white yet still be Latinx. My "acts" serve as a Borderland space, where I attempt to understand who I am through unraveling and pushing back against the labels and stereotypes forced upon me. I investigate how the process of mestizaje influenced and continues to influence the way I have come to identify (from saying that I am from the U.S. to Latinx to Paraguayan). In becoming and identifying as a *nepantlera,* this thesis uncovers the complexities of my lived experience while also acknowledging the privileges and oppressions that I have experienced with avowing a certain identity.

In Chapter Three, I dissect my experiences as a trans male to understand what it means to "pass" as a certain gender identity. As the vignettes evolved, I realized that while growing up, I passed as a female to survive in a household that viewed my body as female despite my affinity to wearing masculine clothing. Yet, my acts of resistance, such as wearing converse at my cousin's wedding, showcased my attempts to fight back against my ascribed femininity. And

now, as I enter the pièce de resistance, by starting the transition process of HRT, I share my desire and hope to embody and physically appear more masculine to successfully pass as a male.

Each chapter in this thesis, with the exploration of my personal experience living in the Borderlands and the Nepantla, serves as a tool to further understand TCI ways of being. Ultimately, when I began writing this thesis about TCIs, I wanted to see my "self" within academic scholarship. In both my undergraduate and graduate career, I would spend my time in classes for nine out of the twelve months without coming across a reading by a scholar of transnational experience. The scholars would either be white, Black, Latinx, Chicanx, or from the Global South writing about their experiences permanently living in one location or writing about others migratory lives. Not to say that the previous scholarship is not essential, because it is, but instead scholarship is needed in academia to cater and resonate with those who have never permanently resided in just one place or culture.

In the current final chapter of this thesis, I explore the contributions I hope to make to ongoing conversations surrounding Borderlands and the Nepantla to account for transnational subjects such as TCIs. I then discuss what I learned by using autoethnography and the ethical implications and theoretical contributions of my study.

Learning with Autoethnography

When I began writing this thesis about TCI experience, I also wanted to add onto ongoing conversations of passing. As indicated in "Chapter One: Introduction," scholarship on passing varies, but overall implies the continuous conscious and sometimes unconscious attempt and ability by an individual of one group to be identified as a member of a different cultural or identity group. With no sole definition of passing, I desired to complexify the phenomena of passing with transnational subjects who are multi-racial, multi-cultural, and/or questioning their

gender identity/expression. I wanted to write a thesis that extended the work of scholars like Anzaldúa (2007), Cherrie Moraga (1981), AnaLouise Keating (2006), Roberto Gutierrez-Perez (2018), Amber Johnson & Benny LeMaster (2020), Bernadette M. Calafell (2007)**,** and Alicia Arrizon (2006), who have used their scholarship to complicate and analyze silenced populations and their experiences. In the following section, I go into how I came to autoethnography and how autoethnography allowed me to dive into discussions revolving around gender and racial passing. Coming into this project, I knew research exploring TCI experience seldom diverted from the gaze of the "other." In other words, these studies rarely stray from focus group projects where scholars generalize TCI experience through themes and scarcely focus on one individual person (Rustine, 2014). The problem with generalizing TCI bodies is that it homogenizes our identities and experiences when every TCI's journey is different. We all come from different backgrounds, from familial occupations, race, gender to various citizenships. Our senses of belonging differ, and the way we form and negotiate identity varies. Thus, in this thesis, I knew I needed to use a research method that would allow me to situate the "I" within a broader cultural context. This methodological marking is found in autoethnography, where the self is not a "self-centered product, but a reciprocal process" that uses reflexivity to examine the connections within research and the researcher (Steier, 1991, p. 7).

Autoethnography has no easy step-by-step pamphlet, and therefore as my narratives came to fruition, I had no idea where I would end up or what I would find along the way. Despite the lack of a roadmap, through my experience conducting this study, I found that as a methodological approach, autoethnography has multiple benefits. First, autoethnography enables the exploration and critique of identity, culture, and social phenomena. Second, the method allows marginalized individuals space for their voices and experiences within academic spaces

while also making said research accessible to non-academic audiences (Adams et al., 2015). Third, autoethnography creates an intellectual space to apply interdisciplinary approaches to research as well as transnational theories. Fourth, autoethnography allows for the usage of languages outside of the overarching English standard within Western academia. And fifth, the method highlights the need for self-reflexivity requiring researchers to view their ways of knowing and viewing themselves and the world as an active rather than passive occurrence (Steier, 1991, p. 84).

The above five benefits I found in using autoethnography were pivotal in exploring my experience as a TCI and understanding my racial passing and gender passing identities for four reasons. One, autoethnography allowed me to use my narratives as a form of inquiry. As Aisha S. Durham (2014) states, "Autoethnography unearths. It is the mind-mining excavation of experience exhumed from buried field notes, and dormant memories recovered to reconstruct one's self within a particular historical or cultural context" (p. 19). This space within autoethnography to negotiate one's identity coupled with Anzaldúa's thoughts on the Nepantla provided room for me to question, break down, and rebuild my own identities through resisting ascribed identifiers. Two, autoethnography allowed me to incorporate Chicanx theories such as theory of the flesh and mestizaje to analyze my racial passing experience further. The method has also allowed me to use gender theories such as gender performativity and queer time to expand on my experiences related to gender passing. Three, autoethnography allowed me to be flexible in terms of what language I could write in. And four, autoethnography allowed me agency to organize my narratives and poems in a metaphor of a play. A structure necessitated by the way my vignettes and poems came to be written and promptly analyzed.

The flexibility of autoethnography allowed me to use a decolonial framework where I could code-switch between English and Spanish. The ability to do so was vital for my study as my liminal identities necessitated that I use both languages. The most difficult part while I changed between English and Spanish was the translation. Sometimes it was hard to know what English word would be synonymous.

Pero, el uso de autoetnografía por parte de mi estudio proporciona una salida para aquellos que experimentan marginación y aquellos que habitan en espacios liminales de experimentar privilegios y opresión simultáneos. Como individuo transmasculino de la tercera cultura Latina, mis experiencias ayudan a llenar el vacío dentro de la academia y la literatura Borderland que no tiene en cuenta las narrativas de individuos de la tercera cultura e individuos transmasculinos. Espero que la futura literatura considere a las personas de género y biculturales a medida que sus cuerpos se mueven entre fronteras, entre tierras, entre aguas. En cuanto a mí, por ahora, por el momento, mi historia no ha terminado. Mis experiencias acaban de comenzar y mi identidad continuará[4.1].

Other than language, using a decolonial approach enabled me to incorporate my poems as a way to resist colonial ways of writing. Unlike narrative writing, I find poetry allows for the writer to engage with both body and affect (Lugones, 2010; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). As I wrote my memories, I found that my narratives alone did not quench my thirst to comprehend, feel, and grasp on my experiences as a TCI. Instead, I found myself writing poems to compensate for the lack of coherent sentences I was failing to scramble together. In doing so, I realized that if my words were a quilt, my narratives created shapes in the tapestry, and my poems became the thread that stitched them together. Using both narratives and poetry in metaphor of a play approach to autoethnography, I sought to create pauses within each “act” for

my words to sink in. I sought to push the boundaries of language and fight against the English dominant norm. I sought to create a back and forth conversation between events. For my words to mean something. For my experiences to resonate with someone who feels similarly or who has faced similar tensions. In using both English and Spanish, I envisioned this autoethnography to add to a theoretical development of interest to both Latino/a/x and intercultural communication scholars: an attempt to decolonize autoethnography.

To further elaborate on a point I made earlier on the usage of autoethnography and the Nepantla, I discovered that writing this thesis gave me room to engage in identity work. In this engagement of exploring my racial identity (Chapter Two) and gender identity (Chapter Three), I experienced what Anzaldúa (2007) calls *ruptures* (in my case, learning and re-learning what it means to "be" a certain identity). These ruptures came through my inner monologue where I started questioning and re-evaluating myself and my surroundings. Ruptures I mention might never mend but are ones I learn to come to terms with (e.g., I have come to embrace my Paraguayan identity and heritage despite knowing that my relationship with my family in Paraguay will always be tumultuous due to a language barrier and now, as I medically transition from female to male). These ruptures also came through in how I questioned identity categories akin to jaulas[4.2]. Jaulas, in the sense that identity markers limit the vocabulary an individual has to identify themselves, but at the same time the individual must acknowledge that the ascribed and avowed identities have "real, tangible consequences" (De Los Santos Upton, 2019, p. 163). Consequences I expand on in Chapter Two in terms of white privilege and Chapter Three in terms of fear of violence as I transition from female to male.

While identifying the ruptures, re-reading and finessing my narratives provided me room to reflect upon the way I remembered the events I write about. As I reflected, I found myself

having multiple *epiphanies* or "transformative moments and realizations that significantly shape or alter the (perceived) course of our lives" (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017, p. 7; Denzin, 1989). For example. While writing "No me endentistes, 2021" in Chapter Three, I tried to put myself in my stepparent's shoes to understand why we never seemed to get along. Before writing, I thought they disliked me solely because I was a reminder of mi papá's past marriage. But as I wrote, I realized that we just did not and could never understand each other. Their values did not equate or mirror my own, and I forgive them. At the same time, I forgive and forgave myself too.

- I forgive my past self for not knowing or having the words to describe how I identified.
- I forgive my past self for learning the difference between Hispanic and Latin American by accident after a quick Google search during the third year of my undergraduate career.
- I forgive my past self for performing femininity to survive rather than continuing to resist gender norms imposed upon me.

Even though I forgive my past self for my decisions, I made and continue to make sure that I hold myself and am held accountable for my ignorance in my white privilege and now, as I transition, my male privilege. As I wrote, I learned that the phenomena of passing is not a linear experience but is a continuous one. Although the lack of a single definition hinders any complete understanding of what it means to pass as cultures and societal standards differentiate amongst countries, individuals must hold and be held accountable as well as be mindful of how they pass (i.e., whether it gives you privilege or places you in the oppressed group).

Despite the benefits and crucial elements autoethnography provide, I faced two challenges while writing this thesis. First, as readers engage with my project, I cannot help but wonder what their reactions are/would be. I am aware that those who have similar experiences may not relate or resonate with my story or may have a negative reaction in reliving their

respective pasts. Second, I found it challenging as an autoethnographer to reflect and be self-reflexive writing the stories while also reconciling with the privileged position I have to share my story. Although I did not directly situate myself in terms of class, my status as a child of a diplomat placed me on a more privileged status than my peers abroad. Third, I noticed that I stopped myself from sharing some narratives about mi papá and my extended family in both Paraguay and the U.S. I did this for a couple of reasons: One, it has taken a while for mi papá to come to terms with who I am, and arguably, who I have always been. The narratives I planned to share involved his initial reactions. I decided not to share the specifics of this interaction because despite the rocky start to me coming out to him, he has supported my journey on HRT and am grateful to have him as mi papá. Two, my relationship with my extended family is a complicated one. I consider it to be a strained relationship except for my aunts and the select few cousins I regularly keep in touch with and who are supportive of my transition process. I did not grow up with yearly family gatherings and thus never had the chance to connect with either side extensively fully. I decided not to go in-depth about reactions upon hearing about my transition because it is still ongoing. I have not come out to everyone on both sides, and I am unsure if I ever will. If they find out by word of mouth, that is fine. Up to them if they want to continue to be a part of my life. I love and respect them; I just hope that they will continue to love and respect me too.

Theoretical Contributions

While this project deals directly with TCIs, using interdisciplinary theories also situates this project within critical intercultural studies. Although critical intercultural studies tends to erase transgender identities in intercultural communication (Eguchi & Calafell 2019; Yep, 2013), I look to theory in the flesh, mestizaje, and intersectionality to explore overlooked populations,

to find ways for queerness to encompass trans bodies and beings and to find ways of disrupting normative gender and sexuality scripts. Further, my analysis of TCIs through Latin American theories advances conversations regarding identity negotiation within varied spaces (e.g., untangling the reasons why I avow either whiteness or my Latinx identity in different spaces). Using TCI experiences and the conceptualization of passing, I develop scholarship at the intersections of trans studies, Latinx studies, and intercultural communication.

Second, I would argue that examining "passing" through transnational subjects in intercultural communication allows for spaces of reimagining how scholars engage with overlooked or altogether ignored populations. Borderland and Nepantla theory in conjunction with intersectionality, theory in the flesh, and mestizaje allows for a further analysis on the discursive and relational nature of identity negotiation within transnational and TCI communities. Bodies within spaces are constantly being put in the line of fire of/by dominant and privileged ideologies, which seek to hegemonize and legislate conformity. One cannot talk about identity without its evolving intersectional performative nature as it relates to environmental, relational, internal and cultural discourse.

***

Espero que este proyecto ofrezca al menos algunos recursos potenciales para los lectores y, de no ser así, un camino útil para ellos y un recordatorio de que no están solos en la negociación de sus identidades. Además, aunque no quiero dictar otras experiencias, me parece que hay una serie de categorías adicionales de identidad racial / étnica / de género en las que las personas pueden enfrentar desafíos similares. Además, para aquellos que podrían "pasar" como una determinada identidad, este estudio proporciona espacio para que las personas exploren cómo se ven y se entienden a sí mismas[4.3].

Si te vas con una cosa, espero que sea esto: no estás solo[4.4].

[4.1] My study's use of autoethnography provides an outlet for those who experience marginalization and those who dwell in liminal spaces of experiencing simultaneous privileges and oppression. As a transmasculine Latinx third culture individual, my experiences aid in filling in the gap within academia and Borderland scholarship that does not account for narratives of third culture individuals and trans masculine individuals. I hope future scholarship will look at gender and bicultural individuals as their bodies move between borders, between land, between waters. As for me, for now, for the time being, my story is not over. My experiences have only just started, and my identity is to be continued.
[4.2] Jails.
[4.3] I hope this project offers at least some potential resources for readers, and if not, a usable pathway forward for them, and a reminder that they are not alone in negotiating their identities. Furthermore, although I do not want to dictate others experiences, it seems to me like there are a number of additional racial/ethnic/gender identity categories in which individuals may face similar challenges. In addition, for those who might "pass" as a certain identity, this study provides room for individuals to explore how they come to see and understand themselves.
[4.4] If you leave with one thing, I hope it's this: you are not alone.

REFERENCES

Adam, T.E., Ellis, C., & Holman Jones, S. (2017). Autoethnography. In J. Matthes (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods.* John Wiley & Sons, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011

Adams, T.E.., Holman Jones, S., & Ellis, C. (2015). *Autoethnography: Understanding qualitative research.* Oxford University Press.

Aguilar, E.M. (2020). Between worlds: A personal journey of self-reflection while on the path of c*onocimiento.* In Hernandez, L.H. & Gutierrez-Perez, R. (Eds.), *This Bridge we call Communcation: Anzaldúan* approaches *to theory, method, and praxis* (pp.143-157).

Alcoff, L. (2000). Is Latina/o identity a racial identity? In Gracia, J.E. (Eds.), *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States Ethnicity, race and rights* (pp. 23-44). Routledge.

Alexander, B.K. (2011). *Performing black masculinity: Race, culture, and queer identity*. AltaMira Press.

Anderson, A.D., Irwin, J.A., Brown, A.M., & Grala, C.L. (2019). "Your picture looks the same as my picture": An examination of passing in transgender communities. In *Gender Issues*, *37*, 4-60.

Anzaldúa, G. (2000). *Interviews/Entrevistas*. Routledge.

Anzaldúa, G. (2007). *Borderlands/La Frontera/ The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.

Anzaldúa, G. (2015). *Light in the dark/luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spritiuality, reality*. The Gloria Anzaldúa Literary Trust.

Anzaldúa, G. & Keating, A.L. (2013). *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation*. Routledge.

Anzaldúa, G. & Moraga, C. (1981). *This bridge called my back.* State University of New York Press

Arrizón, A. (2006). *Queering mestizaje: transculturation and performance.* University of Michigan Press.

Behar, R. (1996). *The Vulnerable Observers*. Bacon Press.

Bennett, D., Hennekam, S. Macarthur, S., Hope, C., & Goh, T. (2019). Hiding gender: How female composers manage gender identity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 113,* 20-32.

Berry, K. (2007). Embracing the catastrophe: Gay body seeks acceptance. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13* (259), 259-281.

Berry, K. (2012). (Un)covering the gay interculturalist. In N. Barham, & M.P. Orbe, (Eds.) *Identity Research and Communication: Intercultural Reflections and Future Directions,* (pp. 223-237). Lexington Books.

Berry, K. (2016). *Bullied: Tales of torment, identity, and youth*. Routledge.

Berry, K., Gillotti, C.M., & Adams, T.E. (2020). *Living sexuality: Stories of LGBTQ relationships, identities, and desires*. Brill Sense.

Bhaba, H.K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Billard, T.J. (2019). Passing and the Politics of Deception: Transgender bodies, cisgender aesthetics, and the policing of inconspicuous marginal identities. In Docan-Morgan, T. (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Deceptive Communication* (pp. 463-477). Springer.

Bennet, N. (2016). The repatriation experiences of American third culture kids. *College of Educational Studies* Dissertations. Paper 12.

Bochenek, M.G. (2018, July 6). *US: Separated families report trauma, lies, coercion.* Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/26/us-separated-families-report-trauma-lies-coercion

Bochner, A.P. (2007). Notes toward an ethic of memory in autoethnographic inquiry. In Denzin, N.K. & Giardina, M.D. (Eds.), *Ethical futures in qualitative research: Decolonizing the politics of knowledge.* Routledge.

Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2016). *Evocative Autoethnography.* Routledge.

Bockting, W.O., Miner, M.H., Swinburn, R.E., Romine, A.H., Coleman, E. (2013). Stigma, mental health, and resilience in an online sample of the US transgender population. *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(5), 943-951.

Bonebright, D.A. (2010). Adult third culture kids: HRD challenges and opportunities. *Human Resource Development International, 13*(3), 351-359. DOI: 10.1080/13678861003746822

Bosniak, L. (2006). *The citizen and the alien: Dilemmas of contemporary membership.* Princeton University Press.

Boylorn, R.M. & Orbe, M.P. (2021). *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting cultural identities in everyday life* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 5,* 75-86.

Bright, L.K., Malinksy, D., & Thompson, M. (2015). Causally interpreting intersectionality theory. *Philosophy of Science, 83,* 60-81.

Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In S.E. Case (Ed.), *Performing feminisms: Feminist critical theory and theatre*, 270-292. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* Routledge.

Butler, J. (2009). "Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics." *AIBR: Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana 4*(3): i–xiii.

Calafell, B.M. (2007). *Latina/o communication studies: Theorizing performance*. Peter Lang.

Calafell, B.M. (2010). Rhetorics of Possibility: Challenging the textual bias of rhetoric through the theory of the flesh. In E.E. Schell & K.J. Rawson (Eds.), *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies* (pp.104-117). University of Pittsburgh Press.

Calafell, B.M. (2019). Narrative authority, theory in the flesh, and the fight over the death and life of Marsha P. Johnson. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking, 6*(2), 26-29. doi:10.14321/qed.6.2.0026

Calafell, B.M. & Delgado, F.P. (2004). Reading Latina/o images: Interrogating *Americanos*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 21*, 1-24. DOI:10.1080/0739318032000184370

Calafell, B.M. & Moreman, S.T. (2010). Iterative hesistancies and Latinidad. *The Handbook of critical intercultural communication*, 400-416.

Cantú, L. (2009). cha*The Sexuality of Migration: Border crossings and Mexican immigrant men.* New York University Press.

Chávez, K.R. (2013). *Queer Migration Politics: Activist rhetoric and coalitional possibilities.* University of Illinois.

Chávez, K. (2020). *Queer and Trans Migrations.* University of Illinois Press

Chawla, D., & Atay, A. (2018). Introduction: Decolonizing Autoethnography. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, *18*(1), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708617728955

Correll, R. (Creator), O'Brien, B. (Creator), & Poryes, M. (Creator). (2006). *Hannah Montana* [Television series]. USA: Disney Channel.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 8, 139 – 167.

Curtis, M. (Creator) & Schulman, R.S.H. (Creator). (2009). Jonas [Television series]. USA: Disney Channel.

de Gabriel, N., Vázquez García, F., & DePalma, R. (2020). Defining desire: (Re)storying a "fraudulent" marriage in 1901 Spain. *Sexualities*, *23*(3), 287–306. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718817159

De Los Santos Upton, S. (2019). Nepantla activism and coalition building: Locating identity and resistance in the cracks between worlds. *Women's studies in communication, 42*(2), 135-139.

DeChaine, R., Calafell, B.M., Chávez, K.R., Cisneros, J.D., & Demo, A.T. (2012). *Border Rhetorics: Citizenship and Identity on the U.S. Mexico Frontier.* University of Alabama Press.

Denzin, N.K. (1989). *Interpretive biography.* Sage.

Denzin, N.K.; Lincoln, Y.S., & Smith, Linda T.(2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Sage.

Durham, A. (2014). *At home with hip hop feminism: Performances in communication and culture.* Peter Lang Publishing Group.

Dreger, A. (2000). *Hermaphrodites and the medical invention of sex.* Harvard University Press.

Eguchi, S. & Calafell, B. (2019). *Queer Intercultural Communication.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *13*(1), 3–29.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 733-768). Sage.

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narratives, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Ed.)* (pp. 733-768). Sage Publications.

Erikson, E. (1970). "Identity Crisis" in Autobiographic Perspective." *The Making of Modern Science: Biographical Studies, 99,* 730–759.

Flores-González, N., Aranda, E., & Vaquera, E. (2014). "Doing Race": Latino Youth's Identities and the Politics of Racial Exclusion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *58*(14), 1834–1851. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764214550287

Flores, L. (2003). Constructing rhetorical borders: Peons, illegal aliens, and competing narratives of immigration. *Critical Studies in Media Communicatio*n, 20(4), 362-387.

Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and punish: The birth of a prison*. Penguin Random House.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures.* Basic Books.

Ghabra, H. (2015). Disrupting privileged and oppressed spaces: Reflecting ethically on my Arabness through feminist autoethnography. *Kaleidoscope: A graduate journal of qualitative communication research, 14*(2), 1-15.

Ginsberg, E. (1996). *Passing and the fictions of identity*. Duke University Press.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity.* Simon & Schuster Inc.

Goltz, D.B. & Pérez, K. (2012). Borders without bodies: Affect, proximity, and utopian imaginaries through "Lines in the Sand". In DeChaine, R., Calafell, B.M., Chávez, K.R., Cisneros, J.D., & Demo, A.T. (Eds.). *Border Rhetorics* (pp. 165-178). University of Alabama Press.

Grimes, S. (2019, August 25). *Writing Prompt: I am my own muse.* Medium. https://medium.com/the-1000-day-mfa/writing-prompt-i-am-my-own-muse-45f4407835f6

Grosfoguel, R. (2004). Race and ethnicity or racialized ethnicities?: Identities within global coloniality. Ethnicities, 4(3), 315–336.

Grosz, E. (1995). *Space, time, and perversion*. Routledge.

Gutierrez-Perez, R. (2018). Monstrosity in Everyday Life: Nepantleras, Theories in the Flesh, and Transformational Politics. *The Popular Culture Studies Journal*, *6* (2-3), 345-368.

Gutierrez-Perez, R. & Herández, L.H. (2020). *This bridge we call communication: Anzaldúan approaches to theory, method, and praxis.* Lexington Books.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinity*. Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure.* Duke University Press.

Hardiman, R., Jackson, B., & Griffin, P. (2013). *Conceptual foundations*. In M. Adams, W.J. Blumenfeld, C.R. Castanpapáa, H.W. Hackman, M.L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice.* (pp.26-35). Routledge.

Harris, T.M. (2018). I know it was the blood: Defining the biracial self in a Euro-American society. In González, A., Houston, M., & Chen, V. (Eds.) *Our Voices: Essays in culture, ethnicity, and communication* (pp. 210-215) Roxbury Publishing.

Heideger, M. (1996). *Being and Time*. State University of New York Press.

Hernandez, L., Bowen, D., De Los Santos Upton, S., & Martinez, A. (2019). *Latina/o/x communication studies: Theories, methods, and practice.* Lexington Books.

Hervey, E. (2009). Cultural transitions during childhood and adjustments to college. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 28*(1), 3-12.

Hobson, K. (2013). Performative tensions in female drag performances. *Kaleidoscope: A graduate journal of qualitative communication research, 12*(4).

Holling, M.A. & Calafell, B.M. (2007). Identities on stage and staging identtiies: ChicanoBrujo performances as emancipatory practices. *Text & Performance Quarterly, 27,* 58-83.

Human Rights Campaign. (2019, Nov 18). *HRC releases annual report on epidemic of anti-transgender violence*.

Retrieved from https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-releases-annual-report-on-epidemic-of-anti-transgender-violence-2019

Human Rights Campaign. (2020). *Sexual orientation and gender identity definitions*. https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions

Issa, L. (2019, July 17). *Third culture kids: The global citizens.* Medium. https://medium.com/@lama_26085/third-culture-kids-the-global-citizens-220c0e738eff

Johnson, A. & LeMaster, B. (2020). *Gender futurity, intersectional autoethnography: Embodied theorizing from the margins*. Routledge.

Johnson, J.R. (2012). Bordering as social practice: Intersectional identifications and coalitional possibilities. In DeChaine, R., Calafell, B.M., Chávez, K.R., Cisneros, J.D., & Demo, A.T. (Eds.) *Border Rhetorics* (pp.33-47). University of Alabama Press.

Keating, A.L. (2006). From borderlands and new mestizas to nepantlas and nepantleras: Anzaldúan theories for social change. *Human Architecture: Journal of the sociology of self-knowledge, 4*(3), 5- 16.

Kimoto, D.M. (2018). Being *Hapa*: A choice for cultural empowerment. In González, A., Houston, M., & Chen, V. (Eds.) *Our Voices: Essays in culture, ethnicity, and communication* (pp. 190-194) Roxbury Publishing.

Kirk, G. & Okazawa-Rey, M. (2013). *Gendered lives: Intersectional perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

Kitzinger, C. (2005). Heteronormativity in action: Reproducing the heterosexual nuclear family in after-hours medical calls. *Social Problems, 52*(4), 477- 498.

Lacy, M.G. & Ono, K.A. (2011). *Critical rhetorics of race*. New York University Press.

Leon-Boys, D. (2019). A Latina Captain: Decentering Latinidad through audience constructions in *Dexter*. In L. Hernandez, D. Bowen, D., S. De Los Santos Upton, & A. Martinez, (Eds.). *Latina/o/x communication studies: Theories, methods, and practice.* Lexington Books.

Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia: A journal of feminist philosophy,* 25(4), 742-759.

Maldonado, J.A. (2020). Manifestx: Toward a rhetoric loaded with future. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 17,* 104-110.

Manning, J. & Adams, T.E. (2015). Popular culture studies and autoethnography: An essay on method. *The Popular Culture Studies Journal, 3*(2), 187-220.

Martinez, J. (2019, July 30). *When it comes to Latinidad, who is included and who isn't?* Remezcla. https://remezcla.com/features/culture/when-it-comes-to-latinidad-who-is-included-and-who-isnt/

Mattson, L.D. (2020). *Elemental climate disaster texts and queer ecological temporality.* [Master's Thesis]. Scholar Commons.

McCaig, N.M. (2012). Raised in the margin of the mosaic: Global nomads balance worlds within. In G.H. Bell-Villada & N. Sichel (Eds.), *Writing out of limbo: International childhoods, global nomads and third culture kids* (pp. 45-56). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs*, *30*(3), 1171-1800.

McClintock, A. (1995). *Imperial leather: Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*. Routledge.

McPhail, M.L. (2008). Rhetoric and race. In Donsbach, W. (Ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Vol. 9, pp.4330-4333). Blackwell Publishing.

Mendieta, Eduardo. 2000. "The Making of New Peoples: Hispanicizing Race." In *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Pablo de Greiff, 45–49. New York: Routledge.

Milian, C. (2017). Extremely Latin, XOXO: Notes on LatinX. *Cultural Dynamics*, *29*(3), 121–140. https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374017727850

Minge, J. & Zimmerman, A. (2012). *Concrete and Dust: Mapping the Sexual Terrains of Los Angeles*. Routledge.

Molina Guzmán, I. (2006). Mediating Frida: Negotiating Discourses of Latina/o Authenticity in Global Media Representations of Ethnic Identity. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 23(3), 232–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180600800841

Molina-Guzmán, I., & Valdivia, A. N. (2004). Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture. *Communication Review*, *7*(2), 205-221. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490448723

Molina-Guzmán, I. & Cacho, L. M., (2014). Historically mapping contemporary intersectional feminist media studies. In Carter, C., McLaughlin, L., & Steiner, L. (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to media and gender.* (71-80). Routledge.

Moraga, C. (2015). La Güera. In Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (Eds.), *This bridge called my back* [Fourth Edition] (pp. 23-27). State University of New York Press.

Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.

Moreman, S.T. (2011). Qualitative interviews of racial fluctuations: The "how" of Latina/o-White hybrid identity. *Communication Theory, 21*(2), 197-216. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2011.01382.x

Moreman, S.T. & Calafell, B.M. (2008). Buscando para nuestra latinidad: Utilizing La Llorona for cultural critique. *Journal of International and intercultural Communication, 1*(4), 309-326. DOI: 10.1080/17513050802344647

Moreman, S.T. & McIntosh, D.M. (2010). Brown scriptings and rescriptings: A critical performance ethnography of Latina drag queens. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 7*(2), 115-135.

Moreno, C. (2016, September 22). *No, 'Hispanic' and 'Latino'' are not the same thing.* Huff Post. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/latino-hispanic-latinx-meaning_n_57e43013e4b0e80b1ba0f7c6

Moriel, L. (2005). Passing and the performance of gender, race, and class acts: A theoretical framework. In *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory, 15*(1), 167-210.

Morning, A. (2011). *The nature of race: How scientists think and teach about human difference.* University of California Press.

Morris, R. (2018). Living In/Between. In González, A., Houston, M., & Chen, V. (Eds.) *Our Voices: Essays in culture, ethnicity, and communication* (pp. 195-204). Roxbury Publishing.

Moya, P.M.L. (2002). *Learning from experience: Minority identities, multicultural struggles*. University of California Press.

Mudambi, A. (2015). The construction of Brownness: Latino/a and South Asian bloggers' response to SB 1070. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 8*(1), 44-62.

Muñoz, C. (1989). *Youth, identity, power: The Chicano movement.* Verso.

Muñoz, J.E. (2009). *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity.* New York University Press.

Nagel, J. (2019). Intersectionality-As-Metaphor and Theories of Flesh. *Women's Studies in Communication, 42*(4), 427-431, DOI: 10.1080/07491409.2019.1682918

New report reveals rampant discrimination against transgender people by health providers, high HIV rates and widespread lack of access to necessary care. (2019). National LGBTQ Task Force. Retrieved February 24, 2021, from https://www.thetaskforce.org/new-report-reveals-rampant-discrimination-against-transgender-people-by-health-providers-high-hiv-rates-and-widespread-lack-of-access-to-necessary-care-2/

Nelson, C.M. (2015). Resisting whiteness: Mexican American studies and rhetorical struggles for visibility. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 8*(1), 63-80. DOI: 10.1080/17513057.2015.991080

Noe-Bustamante, L., Mora, L. & Hugo Lopez, M. (2020, August, 11). *View son Latinx as a pan-ethnic term for U.S. Hispanics.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/views-on-latinx-as-a-pan-ethnic-term-for-u-s-hispanics/

Peterson, C. (2001) Foreword: Eccentric bodies. In Bennett, M. & Dickerson, V. D. (Eds.) *Recovering the Black female body: Self-representation by African American women*, (pp.ix-xvi). Rutgers University Press.

Pollock, D.C. (1988). *Third Culture Kids: The experience of growing up among worlds*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Pollock, D.C. & Van Reken, R.E. (2001). *Third culture kids: The experience of growing up among worlds*. Intercultural Press.

Pollock, D.C. & Van Reken, R.E. (2009). *Third culture kids: Growing up among worlds.* Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Poullain de la Barre, F. (1673). *The Equality of Sexes.* Manchester University Press.

Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages*. Duke University Press.

Quinan, C. L. & Bresser, N. (2020). Gender at the border: Global responses to gender-diverse subjectivities and nonbinary registration practices. *Global Perspectives*. 1(1).

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.

Rinderle, S. (2005). The Mexican diaspora: A critical examination of signifiers. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 29*(4), 294-316.

Rinderle, S. & Montoya, D. (2008). Hispanic/Latino identity labels: An examination of cultural values and personal experiences. *Howard Journal of Communications, 19*(2), 144-164.

Ritchie, A. (2010). *On 'passing in the transgender community.* The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide. https://glreview.org/article/on-passing-in-the-transgender-community/

Rivera-Santiago, A. (1996). Understanding Latino ethnic identity development: A review of relevant issues. *New England Journal of Public Policy, 11*(2).

Rodriguez, C. (2000). *Changing race: Latinos, the census and the history of ethnicity.* New York University Press.

Rodriguez, F. (2020). *Passing vs. Non-Passing: Latina/o/x experiences and understandings of being presumed white* (Publication No. 1121). [Master's Thesis, California State University San Bernardino]. CSUSB Scholarworks.

Rogers, B. (2019). "Contrary to all the other shit I've said": Trans men passing in the south. In *Qualitative Sociology, 42*, 639-662.

Rustine, E.L. (2018). *Developing identity among third culture kids* (Publication No. 373) [Undergraduate honors program thesis, Georgia Southern University]. Digital Commons.

Schneider, D. (Creator). (2010). *Victorious* [Television series]. USA: Nickelodeon Networks.

Shapiro, J. (1991). Transsexualism: Reflections on the persistence of gender and the mutability of sex. In Epstein, J. & Straub, K. (Eds.), *Body guards: The cultural politics of gender ambiguity* (pp. 248-279). Routledge.

Shweder, R.A., Goodnow, J.J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R.A., Markus, H.R., & Miller, P.J. (1998). The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. *Handbook of child psychology* (pp. 716-792).

Soehl, T. & Waldinger, R. (2010). Making the connection: latino immigrants and their cross-border ties. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 33*(9), 1489-1510.

Spillers, H. (1987). Mama's baby, pap's maybe: An American grammar book. *Diacritics, 17*(2), 65-81.

Spry, T. (2009). Bodies of/as evidence in autoethnography. *International Review of Qualitative Research, 1*(4), 603-610.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2019, August 2). *Feminist perspectives on the body.* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-body/

Steir, F. (1991). *Research and reflexivity.* Sage Publications.

Stryker, S. (2017). *Transgender history*. Seal Press.

Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In Gutmann, A. (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (pp. 25-73). Princeton University Press.

Tilley-Lubbs, G.A. & Bénard Calva, S. (2016). *Re-telling our stories: Critical autoethnograhic narratives.* Sense Publishers.

Torres, L. (2018). Latinx? *Latino Studies, 16,* 283-285.

U.S. Department of State. (2008). *Third culture kids.* http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21995.htm

Vega, K.S. & Chavez, K.R. (2018). Latinx rhetoric and intersectionality in racial rhetorical criticism. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 15*(4), 319-325

Velazquez, C. (2019). *Revolución de identidad:An autoethnography on Spanish heritage language & identity*. Publicaition No. 938. [Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations]. Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks.

Washington, Z. & Roberts, L.M. (2019, March 4). *Women of color get less support at work: Here's how managers can change that.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/03/women-of-color-get-less-support-at-work-heres-how-managers-can-change-that

Weinauer, E. (1996). "A Most Respectable Looking Gentleman": Passing, possession, and transgression in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*. In Ginsberg, E. (Ed). *Passing and the fictions of identity*, pp. 37-56.

Yep, G.A., Russo, S. E., Allen, J. K., & Chivers, N. T. (2017). Uniquely *Glee:* Transing racialized gender. In R. A. Lind (Ed.), *Race and gender in electronic media: Content, context, culture* (pp. 55-71). Routledge.

Yoshino, K. (2006). *Covering: The hidden assault on our civil rights*. Penguin Random House, LLC.