ONE Introduction

NEW BORDERS AND DESTINATIONS

THE SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES OF MEXICAN IMMIGRATION

Although I live in Virginia, far from the U.S.-Mexico border, in 2005 it felt as if the border had moved into my backyard. That summer I watched the situation in Herndon, Virginia, with fascination and an uncanny sense of déjà vu as a controversy erupted regarding a group of Latino men. For over a decade a sizable group of day laborers, many of whom were from Mexico and Central America, had been gathering in the parking lot of Herndon's 7-Eleven in the early morning, hoping to find work. The space had become an ad hoc employment center for contractors seeking extra workers for a specific job or local residents looking to employ a handyman for small household projects. Herndon's residents

were becoming increasingly unnerved by the men who were described as "scary" and "unkempt." Residents complained that groups of men would "swarm on top of [customers]" when driving into the 7-Eleven (Cho 2005, July 18: A1). The residents, American citizens who constituted the local English-speaking majority, insisted that the local officials force the men to leave lest they risk arrest. As an alternative, a local social service provider proposed to develop a day labor center so that men looking for work would have a place to congregate. As envisioned by the planners, the site would offer on-site English classes and job skills training, as well as a place to spend the afternoon when work was not available.

Although this seemed like a good idea to some, the proposal to build a day labor center, to resituate Latinos within Herndon, met strong resistance from the majority population. Many of the same residents who were unhappy with the hundred or so men waiting by the 7-Eleven were similarly incensed by the alternative: using tax dollars to build an official day labor center located adjacent to a residential neighborhood. They argued that funding a day labor center would officially encourage illegal immigration (Cho 2005: To3). Many also feared that a town-supported center might encourage even more undocumented workers to come to Herndon.

I watched the circumstances surrounding Herndon's day labor controversy with more than a casual interest. The events were reminiscent of those that I had begun documenting in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, the previous decade. Since the mid-1980s Kennett Square had transitioned from a majority Anglo-European small town into a multiethnic community as Mexican families began moving in and around the area. The issues at stake in Kennett Square during this rapid local transformation were nearly identical to those in Herndon: finding a physical and cultural place for the rapidly growing number of Mexican families moving into the community; frustration with failed national immigration policies and the search for local alternatives; and most significantly, anxiety about the changing local character and communal identity of an Anglo-European historic farming village.

Other issues, such as how to maintain ties to distant families and friends, were voiced by Mexicans who were settling in Kennett Square,

yet they were rarely acknowledged in public discussions because very few of these newcomers spoke English, most were presumed transients, and some were undocumented. When I began my work with some of these Mexican families in 1995, I asked them what their thoughts were, and their responses reflected concerns about incorporation into the community and adapting to life in Pennsylvania: what I refer to as emplacement and belonging. These men and women had a strong desire to make a home in Kennett Square and to provide more opportunities for their families. At the same time, they wanted to maintain connections to their home community in Mexico and preserve their identities as Mexicans living in the United States.[1] Although my early work with this group of Mexican settlers began in Pennsylvania, it was not long before I realized that their stories of settlement and adaptation in Kennett were, and continue to be, deeply tied to their home community in Mexico, a place that I refer to as Textitlán, Guanajuato.[2] Their ties to Textitlán constitute a complex binational existence that has shaped their experiences in Kennett Square, everyday life in their hometown, and how they find and maintain their place and sense of belonging in both communities.

This book, an ethnography based on fieldwork in Mexico and Pennsylvania, explores the challenges encountered by Mexican families as they endeavored to find their place in Kennett Square beginning in the mid-1980s. It situates the events in Kennett Square in the historical context of the changing geography of Mexican immigration, the oldest and most sustained of all of America's immigrations (Massey 1998; Suarez-Orozco 1998; Durand, Massey and Capoferro 2005; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). *Beyond the Borderlands* provides a ten-year longitudinal window between 1995 and 2005 during the formation of the new destination settlement in Kennett Square and the accompanying changes that took place in Textitlán.[3]

I was trained as a folklorist, so when I began my work with Mexican families in 1995, I was intrigued by Kennett Square's Mexican population and the local responses to Mexican settlement. On the surface, Kennett Square resembled the types of small, localized face-to-face communities that were the subjects of sense of place studies common in folklore scholarship.[4] As this project grew, however, it became apparent that the

situation in Kennett Square was deeply multifaceted. Although the total number of Mexicans in Kennett Square was small, as in many rural and suburban communities where Mexicans and other immigrants are settling in the United States, their presence has had an influence disproportionate to their numbers. Their effect on the community's culture and day-to-day life has reshaped Kennett Square's local character. The experiences in Kennett Square for Mexicans and longer-term residents demonstrates that immigrant settlement and incorporation are characterized not so much by assimilating one's culture and identity to "fit in" to a host society but are constituted through diverse experiences that simultaneously integrate newcomers even as their presence reshapes their new community (Alba and Nee 2003, 11).[5] *Beyond the Borderlands* is an examination of the senses of place, and the Mexican sense of belonging, as each evolved in the context of migration between Kennett Square and Textitlán.

NEW DESTINATIONS AND THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHIES OF MEXICAN IMMIGRATION

It was not clear when I began this study in the mid-1990s that Kennett Square was what has been termed a new destination settlement (Zuñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Although Mexican men had been migrating to Kennett Square for years to pick mushrooms, it had only been a few years since these men started moving their families north. By the late 1990s it was apparent that Kennett Square was one of many Mexican settlements emerging in new locations throughout the United States, settlements that were part of a new era of Mexican migration and settlement. What I was witnessing in the field had not been widespread since the classic era of immigration at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century: the formation of new immigrant communities throughout the United States (Massey 2008).

More recently it has come to light that the events in places like Kennett Square are part of a larger national trend in Mexican immigration that has occurred since the mid-1980s: the phenomenon of Mexicans settling

permanently in communities outside the border region. At one time the U.S.-Mexico borderlands were the familiar destination of Mexican immigration and immigration controversy. Throughout the 1980s, national headlines documented the problems of the borderlands: the porous yet militarized border; coyotes (immigrant traffickers) and drug smugglers; migrant deaths in the desert; and undocumented workers siphoning public funds were some of the more common issues discussed. Once considered a localized problem, emigration from Mexico has moved beyond its familiar territory in the borderlands and is now dispersed to new and diverse places across the United States (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005).

The most striking changes have taken place in American suburbs and rural small towns. These communities, once the exclusive domain of Anglo middle- and upper-class families, are increasingly home to a growing number of immigrant families. Throughout the 1990s, the U.S. foreign-born population grew dramatically—increasing to 11.3 million or 57.4 percent—and by 2000, nearly a third of these new immigrant settlers were residing outside of locations that were the historic gateway settlement states and moving into places with little history of immigrant settlement (Singer 2004: 3).[6] This shift in settlement gave rise to new immigrant gateways that experienced growth rates of more than double the national average. These new gateways included states such as Colorado, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina, as well as a number of large metropolitan areas, including Washington, DC, Atlanta, and Denver (Singer 2004: 9–10). Most notably, by 2000 immigrants in these newly emerging gateways were much more likely to settle in suburbs rather than in cities (Singer 2004: 11).

These demographic changes were in part the outcome of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which facilitated the changing social and cultural landscape of Kennett Square. It provided amnesty and legal residency for previously undocumented laborers, primarily Mexican nationals, throughout the United States, allowing former cyclical migrants to settle permanently in the United States (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). Although the

numbers of legal immigrants who were moving into nontraditional settlement areas began to rise in the early 1980s, the total number of immigrants living in new destinations increased significantly immediately after the passage of IRCA in 1986, peaking at 25 percent in the late 1980s and then falling back to 12 percent by 1992 (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002: 127).

The IRCA was not the only event that shaped the changing migration and settlement patterns in the United States. Increased border security in Texas and California ultimately encouraged migrants to stay longer in the United States. Similarly, a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in California, culminating in the passage of Proposition 187,[7] also contributed to the establishment of Mexican communities outside the historic gateway states along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002).

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in 1994. It promoted the integration of the capital markets of the United States and Mexico and thus lowered barriers to the movement of goods, capital, services, and information, but the agreement excluded provisions for labor. NAFTA was expected to create new jobs in Mexico to decrease undocumented immigration to the United States. These expectations were never realized, however (Andreas 1998, 2000; Fernández-Kelly and Massey 2007). In the never-ending pursuit of cheap labor, many of the post-NAFTA U.S.-owned factories in Mexico were shuttered as operations were relocated in China or other Latin American countries. The deregulation of Mexican agriculture and competition from the United States and Canada also forced many Mexican peasants out of agriculture (Fernández-Kelly and Massey 2007). The net effect of NAFTA's economic integration neither decreased the number of displaced Mexican workers nor reduced entry of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico into the United States.

In Kennett Square, most of the pioneer settlers who participated in this study said that they decided to move their families to Pennsylvania after receiving amnesty, but changes in local economic and labor needs also facilitated this process. For instance, the early 1990s saw an expansion of suburban developments throughout Chester County and increased the labor needs in construction and landscaping. These new jobs fueled Mexican settlement in Kennett Square from the mid-1990s onward. In other parts of the United States, the increased demand for domestic assistance (i.e., housekeeping and child care) created a labor market for immigrant women and also promoted a more diverse settlement pattern (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Whereas it was rare in Kennett Square for Mexican women to take domestic housecleaning jobs, women were more often engaged in informal child care in their homes, working for other Mexican women who were employed outside the home. The few Mexican women working outside the home were most often employed as cooks or waitstaff in local restaurants, and some women also worked at a Kennett Square mushroom packing plant.[8]

As locations of settlement, Kennett Square and other new destinations have had limited or no prior history of a Mexican presence. As such, they do not provide the long-standing social and political support networks that are common in the borderlands. New destinations are also unique in that the longer-term citizen residents are facing a variety of unexpected challenges, such as providing bilingual education and culturally appropriate health-care services, as their communities grow. The changes that accompany growth are often fraught with controversy as the very character of local identity shifts along with the population.

Since the mid-1990s, new destinations have often been at the center of immigration debates, most notably where citizens organize against immigrants in an attempt to "take back" their communities through the enactment of local ordinances (Bono 2007; Ludden 2007; Osterling and McClure 2008; Walker 2008). Anti-immigrant actions have included a range of activities, including the creation of zoning laws that redefine who can live together in a legal household and enactment of ordinances that enable local law enforcement to arrest suspected undocumented immigrants and remove them from the community. Some cases have also included open harassment of immigrants (Osterling and McClure 2008). Such local responses are frequently characterized as reactions to the failure of federal immigration policy, but they are also fundamentally battles about who belongs to the community and the local

sense of place. Understanding the dynamics of new destinations is essential to understanding issues of contemporary immigration debate because these communities have become some of the most vocal and influential players in immigration politics.

Among in-depth examinations of new destinations (Lamphere 1992; Fink 2003; Hirsch 2003; Millard, Chapa, and Burillo 2004; Smith 2006; Jones 2008),[9] *Beyond the Borderlands* offers a distinct approach to U.S.-Mexico migration studies because it provides an in-depth examination of the perspectives and influence of both the English-speaking community in the United States and the non-migrating Mexicans in the sending community. This combined approach has uncovered distinct insights into the evolving cultural practices of U.S.-born residents and Mexicans in the early years of the formation of the new destination. It also points to the important influence of the U.S. citizen population on migrants' perceptions of belonging and exclusion in the newly emerging multiethnic community.

In 1995 when I set out to document everyday life for Mexican families settling in Kennett Square, I quickly found that I could not fully understand these events unless I was willing to pay attention to the role of the English-speaking majority in shaping Mexican experiences of emplacement and belonging. My work quickly expanded from a study of a settlement enclave to one about the relationships between the English-speaking majority and Mexican settlers. *Beyond the Borderlands* examines the English-speaking majority's responses to Mexican settlement, which at times seemed paradoxical and contradictory. Although there were overt strategies that appeared to incorporate Mexican families in the community, it was clear that a number of unspoken rules governed who did and did not belong in Kennett Square and that these rules clearly favored the English-speaking majority and marginalized Mexican families struggling to find their place in the community.

Accessing the immigrant community in Kennett Square, however, was not a simple process. In late 1995, I discovered a nonprofit migrant health clinic and a social service agency, Project Salud and La Comunidad Hispana, respectively. These agencies served as my first introduction to the Mexican community, and they were recognized among Mexican

settlers as the places to go when in need of health care and social services or to find help negotiating the complex cultural landscape that was Kennett Square. Drawing upon the resources of La Comunidad Hispana and Project Salud, I was also able to collect essential information about Mexicans who were settling in Kennett Square. The agencies collected demographic data on their client population, including where they were from in Mexico, the average age and family size, and where they were living in Kennett Square.

The fall of 1995 was a tense time in Kennett Square, as it was the peak of racial and ethnic tension between Mexicans and their English-speaking neighbors. Since April 1993, when mushroom workers at Kaolin Mushroom Farms went on strike and demanded better wages and working conditions, there had been a noticeable tension in the community.[10] The strike marked the first time that Mexican workers demonstrated that they were no longer the accommodating and often invisible workforce that farm owners and townspeople had previously known.[11] After the strike, small protests erupted from the English-speaking community. Though most of these were largely nonviolent social protests, they offended and alienated many of the town's Mexican population.

These tensions made my early years in the field challenging. I found that many in the English-speaking community were suspicious of my work and my position as an outsider who they feared might unfairly judge their community, and some Mexican settlers were reluctant to speak with an unfamiliar *gringa* who wanted to know so many details of their lives and experiences. To overcome these barriers, I drew upon my previous career experience as a registered nurse and volunteered at Project Salud. In the process of vaccinating children, completing paperwork, and translating for physicians, I became a familiar face to the Mexican community. The administrator and staff of Project Salud had positive and long-standing relationships with mushroom farm owners and Kennett townspeople, and the clinic's willingness to support my research was perhaps one of my greatest resources in the field, as it allowed me to find my own place in this dynamic community.

As I observed Mexican families in their settlement efforts, I realized that many families were also maintaining homes and continuing to build

relationships in Textitlán. In 1999, I joined families returning to Textitlán for the fiesta season, and I discovered a startling aspect of their lives in their natal home: as a group, migrants' and settlers' position in Textitlán was tenuous and returning families engaged in significant efforts to maintain their place there. I had expected the opposite, that homecomings would be a welcome reprieve from their efforts to emplace themselves in Pennsylvania. My early observations of life in Textitlán revealed that the non-migrating community often viewed these men and women as defectors of a sort. They were envied for their successes but also criticized for "abandoning" their home community to work in the United States.[12] In short, although Mexicans living in Kennett Square were maintaining ties to both communities, they were doing so only with great effort.

MEXICAN SETTLEMENT AND THE RENEGOTIATION OF PLACE AND BELONGING

My examination of Mexican migration and settlement focuses on the transformation of sense of place in Kennett Square and Textitlán. In both ethnographic contexts, I examine the mobile population of Textitlanecos and their relationships with their non-migrating neighbors in Mexico and the native-born population in the United States. My premise is that sense of place develops as newcomers move into (or out of) a place and is dependent on the types and quality of relationships that they build and maintain in the places where they live (Cresswell 1996; Mulgan 2009).

Place is "space made culturally meaningful"; it is the lived context for all human activity and cultural processes (Low 1994: 66). Examinations of sense of place include an assessment of lived experiences and the distinctive characteristics that are associated with place identities. It also references the subjective and emotional attachments that people associate with a place (Agnew 1987). More important, sense of place considers how humans shape the places they inhabit and how places similarly influence human social interactions and cultural processes (Cresswell 2004).[13] Places are intimately experienced, and the sense of place is often described as feeling rooted, attached, or belonging to a place (Tuan 1974, 1977). It is broader than an emotional and cognitive experience, however. Sense of place includes, and emerges from, cultural beliefs and practices that are embedded within particular places (Merrifield 1993; Basso 1996; Low 2000).

Sense of place also recognizes that locales are not necessarily limited by the physical world but can be bounded cognitively through perceptions of belonging and exclusion. These sensate boundaries constitute what folklorist Kent Ryden has termed the "invisible landscape," which he argues is mapped through the exploration of vernacular cultural practices and narrative traditions (1993). Emplacement and belonging are part of this invisible landscape, but in a new destination the invisible landscape is also problematic because immigrants often engage in a sense of belonging that is not limited to one place and is produced through memories as well as the adaptation of cultural practices that were common in the homeland.[14]

Fundamental to the sense of place are the feelings of belonging that Mexicans and long-term residents in Mexico and the United States associate with the places they call home. Belonging is a basic human need (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Young, Russell, and Powers 2004; Mulgan 2007, 2009), but it is not a naturalized state; rather, it is socially constructed and negotiated. It is a process through which "people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields" of experience (Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2005: 12). In new destinations, issues of belonging become a twofold challenge. Local social contexts shift with the introduction of the new population, making new destinations "new" for newcomers and longer-term residents alike. New residents understandably struggle to belong, but the same can be true for those who have lived their entire lives in what has become the new destination. In many instances, longer-term residents experience a type of localized displacement, a feeling that their "home" is no longer a familiar and predictable place, thus making it difficult to embrace the changes taking place around them.[15] Kennett Square's longer-term residents reacted to the changes in their community with a sense of privilege. Because they were "here first," they frequently assumed that their residential longevity justified local divisions

of power and the subordinate position of Mexican settlers. As a group they dominated social relations, controlled local resources, and determined which residents would have access to various places in town and the circumstances of that access.

It is in this context that Kennett Square's longer-term population enacted a variety of spatial practices that were employed to manage and limit Mexican settlers in their attempts to shape the local sense of place. Spatial practice refers to space that is appropriated and inhabited by people and institutions though quotidian practices, behaviors, and activities (Lefebvre 1991: 8; Merrifield 1993; Cleaveland and Pierson 2009). Examining spatial practice forces a recognition that sense of place emerges and is shaped by the structure and hierarchy of social relations (Soja 1989; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005). It includes the privileging of some according to social class, educational attainment, and facility with the English language and the subordination of others who lack these attributes. In the chapters that follow, I analyze spatial practices in order to reveal the mechanism of privilege operating within the dominant population in the development of sense of place in Kennett Square and Textitlán and to demonstrate how Mexican settlers contest these arrangements through narrative and cultural practices (Scott 1990; Lefebvre 1991).

New destinations such as Kennett Square offer an exceptional opportunity to see how events and practices shape the development of sense of place. By adopting this approach, *Beyond the Borderlands* addresses one of the limitations associated with many sense of place studies: representing "place" as a homogeneous local community while at the same time de-emphasizing the pathways through which sense of place develops. Too often sense of place studies emphasize "memory, stasis, and nostalgia," and relegate place to "an essentialist concept which held within it the temptation of relapsing into past traditions, of sinking back into (what was interpreted as) the comfort of Being instead of forging ahead with the (assumed progressive) project of Becoming" (Massey 1994: 119).[16] These interpretations emphasize place stability and minimize place-making as a process, and at the same time they assume a core local identity that is constant and has a long-term historical presence. Even more problematic is the idea that there can be only one sense of place

and that all members of a community experience place equally (Massey 1993: 65; Massey 2005).[17]

Folklorists often take one of two perspectives in their analyses of place: drawing on narrative studies, they reconstruct a sense of place that is rooted in the past and is frequently characterized as threatened by a social or economic transformation.[18] They have also analyzed narrative accounts to reconstitute a present-day sense of place that appears to be stable or unchanging. In both instances, these sense of place studies celebrate place stability rather than examine how, and under what circumstances, sense of place emerges and transforms. One reason for this is that folklorists' work emphasizes the emic perspective of their informants, who in some cases have already constructed an idea of place stability. Thus the folklorist reconstitutes the sense of place as it is interpreted by his or her informants: bounded or isolated, unchanging, and rooted in the past.[19] This is exactly what I encountered when I began working with Kennett Square's English-speaking population.[20] Although I document the sense of place that was described by the English-speaking majority, I also argue that this account of sense of place largely ignores local power relationships and minimizes the fact that residents always actively construct places and local environments that are continually transforming.

Folklorists are not alone in the tendency to emphasize place stability. Doreen Massey's aforementioned comments on the problematics of place are an assessment of the work of human geographers, a critique reiterated by others in her field (Pred 1984). The classical texts of anthropology are also sometimes "cited to justify popular conceptions of place homologous with ideas of boundedness, homogeneity, and exclusion" (McKay 2006a: 198). Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson's (1992, 1997) work on the politics of difference critiques the study of space and place in anthropology, particularly those studies that assume that the "distinctiveness of societies, nations and cultures [is] . . . based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy 'naturally' discontinuous spaces" (1992: 6).

Sense of place is the product of ongoing negotiations, and as such, when it is assumed that places are stable, it effectively diminishes the role of power relations and the ways in which conflict, hierarchies, and

exclusion are created and maintained. In new destinations, it is common for longer-term residents to accuse newcomers of changing *their* communities, often for the worse.[21] In these instances, concerns about community change are drawn upon to create discourses of local identity and history that establish who belongs and to legitimize the exclusion of immigrants (Harvey 1996).

Newcomers are likely to meet different types of welcome, or opposition, to their arrival depending on how they fit into the accepted ideas of local identity. These responses are mediated by established residents and community leaders and their perception of the newcomers and include their preconceived ideas of who the newcomers are as a group, how new arrivals will transform the community, and how they wish to enact their position as longer-term residents to shape the identity and direction of the community. Recently settled migrants, for instance, might be characterized as a threat to the local sense of place (Lattanzi Shutika 2005) or as a local asset that can revitalize a community (Grey and Woodrick 2005; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005), or they may be met with ambivalence (Rich and Miranda 2005; Lattanzi Shutika 2008). It is also possible that settlers can provoke all three responses, at different times, in the same community.[22]

David Harvey (1996) posits that place and its interpretations become more significant in the context of expanding global market forces as they reshape perceptions of space and time, and they have distinct bearings on local power structures. Resisting the taken-for-granted notion that mobile capital and expanded mass communication necessarily render places less distinct or that sense of place is less important to human experience (see Meyrowitz 1985), Harvey argues that places are actually more significant in the context of globalization. This is because even as the globalized world may seem smaller and less distinct, people are more likely to think about their place in the world and have a greater appreciation of the places where they live and work. The restructuring of spatial relations through globalization certainly poses particular challenges to places, but it neither destroys them nor lessens their significance.

Instead, expanding global markets compel residents to see their place as actively competing with other places for mobile capital, making residents become more aware, and often concerned, about what their place can offer. They are also more likely to have a heightened focus on what makes their place exceptional: who lives there, how residents affect the appearance and quality of the community, and how local resources might be engaged to attract outside business and investment. Concomitantly, residents are likely to become hostile or defensive toward people and events that are viewed as a threat to the distinctiveness of their place (Harvey 1996).[23]

In Kennett Square, the introduction of a rapidly growing Mexican population forced longer-term residents to take stock of their community. When Mexican settlers were few in number and largely invisible, their presence caused little concern for the English-speaking majority. When the population expanded to the point where their presence was obvious and they began to reshape the sense of place, many in the majority population expressed concern that Mexicans would diminish, or perhaps destroy, their historic community.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING A SENSE OF BELONGING

The sense of belonging is constituted through shared meanings and a sense of social alliance between people and the places where they reside: it does not necessarily reference a geographic location but can include places that are physical, virtual, or imagined. A sense of belonging enables people to feel like they belong to a place, which in turn allows them to rely on cultural practices to establish and maintain social, political, and economic relationships. The development of the sense of belonging is the result of the activities that people employ to emplace themselves in new and everyday situations; it is a process that consists of multiple strategies that newcomers draw upon to develop relationships and form social networks. These social networks in turn promote cultural expression and social support. Drawing on a framework of emplacement and belonging, we can consider Mexican settlers' relationships to one another, to the citizen community in the United States, and to their homeland. It

redirects attention from internal, bounded local processes to the construction sense of place as a multifaceted dynamic processes that acknowledges that there is no solitary place identity but rather a multiplicity thereof, and that boundaries between places are constructed and maintained through social processes that are the product of human construction and not natural features of the social or physical environment.

Though this study explores the Mexican experience of immigration in order to illustrate the process of immigrant incorporation, it is important to recognize that the emplacement and belonging experience is not exclusively the project of the newly arrived immigrant; it is a shared process between newcomers and longer-term residents, and it reveals how local populations are simultaneously transformed as migrant settlers establish themselves in the community and become part of it. Indeed, anyone experiencing a recent move to a new place can feel a sense of displacement while adjusting to and fitting into the new locale. Belonging can be distinguished from popular notions of assimilation, a process associated with transformation and shedding one's cultural heritage; assimilation is often expected of immigrants as a condition of belonging to a local community or to claim a legitimate place in American society.[24] Belonging, in contrast, is constituted through human connections to the places one inhabits and is influenced by the newcomer as well as his or her longer-term neighbors and their shared experiences (Buonfino and Thompson 2007; Mulgan 2007, 2009).[25]

Living in the suburbs of Washington, DC, I have observed some of my neighbors, particularly military families, exhibit an impressive ability to situate themselves and establish a sense of belonging. Military families stationed here are regularly uprooted (typically every two to three years), so in order to feel at home and survive the emotional upheaval that accompanies frequent moves, they must learn to engage each new place and establish connections quickly. When my friend Kelly Wallace, the wife of a career Army officer, moved back to Virginia she explained, "When we move in, I unpack and get everything set up [in the house] right away. We've done it so often that I can typically get my house set up in two weeks; then we start to get involved with our neighborhood, the school."

In everyday life, people actively engage one another to confirm and reaffirm their sense of belonging in ways that are often unnoticed. Indeed, our consciousness of our efforts to belong all but disappears in many everyday situations. It is the unanticipated transgression of belonging, for instance, recognizing a person who is seemingly in the wrong place, adjusting to living in a different town, or feeling out of place when living in a new apartment after a divorce, that forces our recognition of not belonging and how we work to adapt to our surroundings. This is sometimes the case in neighborhoods where many of the homes are rental properties. When people are constantly coming and going, concerns about belonging are often minimized or put off for the time when life is more "permanent."

The social practices that encompass the sense of belonging include initiation rituals and ceremonies that mark rites of passage. Belonging can be expressed through institutional structures, such as the observance of the Roman Catholic sacraments throughout the life cycle. It also includes informal behaviors that are not mandated but nevertheless expected if one is to maintain ties to the people and places where one lives. Activities such as maintaining regular contact with friends and neighbors, attending company picnics, joining the school P.T.O., and otherwise keeping up with one's social "obligations" are in themselves essential to maintaining a sense of belonging to one's neighborhood or group.

BELONGING AND THE TRANSLOCAL

When I entered Kennett Square for the first time it was immediately obvious that the town was in the midst of a transition. The sense of place had become unpredictable as English-speaking and Mexican residents sought new ways to interpret their community. As Mexicans settled in greater numbers, it seemed that the community was changing dramatically; it was also apparent that neither group could rely on old assumptions regarding how to interact with its neighbors.

One might assume that the effort involved with developing a sense of belonging after a move would ensure that it could rarely be produced

in more than one place. Certainly, once one has moved from one community to another it is rare to maintain deep or significant connections with the majority of people who have been left behind. Yet many of the Mexican families in Kennett Square that I observed were engaged in a form of multilocal belonging: the process of immersing themselves in and maintaining ties to Kennett Square and their natal community simultaneously. For this reason, Textitlán cannot be characterized as simply a migrant "sending" community, because it continues to figure prominently in the day-to-day lives of Mexicans who have settled in Kennett Square, and it is in many ways the center of Mexican life. Many Mexican families return, as often as possible, to visit their families and friends. However, Mexican settlers still consider Textitlán home, not simply a place to visit. These families often maintain houses in Textitlán, and they regularly return to participate in the social and spiritual life of the village, even as they actively build their lives in Kennett Square.

In this respect, the ongoing connections between Kennett Square and Textitlán can be characterized as creating a transnational community, that is, a group of people for whom everyday life centers on the simultaneous engagement in the social life of two places. Kennett Square and Textitlán constitute a type of "transnational social space" (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Pries 1999; Faist and Ozveren 2004; Smith 2006), but I do not use the term "transmigrant" to identify these men and women in the conventional sense. The terms "transnational" and "transmigrant" carry specific associations and meanings about the nature of social and cultural processes within immigrant populations, and many of these are not reflective of this particular group (see Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton 1992 and Rouse 1992 for a review of the more common definitions of "transnationalism" and "transmigrant"). For instance, most studies define transmigrants as a group of people that self-identifies as a single community that lives in two distinct places.[26] This is clearly not the case in Textitlán or Kennett Square. Textitlán is a large township with an economically and socially diverse population of forty-eight thousand, of which over half of the adult population has elected to migrate to the United States at least one time for work.[27] Similarly,

Kennett Square's Mexican population, although largely from Textitlán, has also attracted small numbers of Mexicans from San Miguel Arcángel,[28] several other townships that are adjacent to Textitlán, and a small number from Toluca, located in the state of Mexico.[29]

The connections that Mexican settlers maintain within Textitlán and Kennett Square are also much more fragile than those typically described in the scholarship on transnational communities; the experiences on the ground in Kennett Square and Textitlán reveal a complex expression of binational existence that does not easily fit into the conventional understanding of transnational processes. In neither Kennett Square nor Textitlán can these men and women rest on the assumption that they have a taken-for-granted place or that they truly belong. In this respect, *Beyond the Borderlands* stands apart from other binational studies of Mexican migration in that it highlights the precarious situation of these men and women as they maintain their connections in two places. The Mexican settlers in Kennett Square are in a sense transmigrants based on the fact that their lives are a series of journeys between two locales, but at the same time, lived experiences and cultural practices common in Kennett Square and Textitlán have evolved into a distinct binational existence (Hirsch 2003; Smith 2006). Their experiences in Mexico and the United States are also shaped largely in the context of each community's local milieu; this book explores their efforts to belong to two distinct, but deeply connected, places.

Textitlán and Kennett Square do not form a conventional transnational social space, but instead form one that can more accurately be described as translocal: a local-to-local spatial dynamic (Ma 2002). Translocal places are those whose social relations and local communities have been reshaped through transnational dynamics (Conradson and McKay 2007). I use the term "translocal" to acknowledge that the local is an important ongoing source of meaning and identity for Mexican settlers, that migrants form multifaceted connections that link them to Kennett Square and Textitlán in distinct and complex ways and as a result generate a set of discursive and spatial practices that can reconfigure and transform the cultural landscape and power relations in both locales (Mandaville 1999; McKay 2006b).

In order to uncover the translocal processes of emplacement and belonging, this study examines the migration sending and receiving communities, Textitlán and Kennett Square, as coequals. There were multiple benefits of conducting this study in these communities. Fieldwork in both locations provided ethnographically informed insights to Mexican life across borders. The multisite approach also provided access to a broader range of cultural practices: I was able to witness settlers reconstitute their lives in both cultural fields and in a variety of social contexts. *Beyond the Borderlands* explores three questions about the nature of belonging and sense of place in the context of Mexican settlement: How is belonging, particularly multilocal belonging, produced through daily experiences? How is sense of place structured through spatial practices during settlement in new destinations as well as sending communities? How are ideas about belonging utilized at particular moments to explicitly establish collective identities or to legitimize claims to territory?

FIELD SITES

Kennett Square: The Mushroom Capital

The first time I drove into Kennett Square in October 1995, I was looking for Mexicans. I wanted to begin an ethnographic study of the effects of migration on family life, and my friend Dona, a lifelong Philadelphian, had told me there was a Mexican migrant community in nearby Kennett Square.[30] Dona explained that Kennett Square was locally known as the "Mushroom Capital of the World," and the industry depended on Mexican labor. I decided to drive to Kennett one rainy afternoon, but as I surveyed the town I found no indication of a Mexican presence. There were no Mexican restaurants or grocery stores, and I did not see anyone who was identifiably Mexican on the streets. What I did find was a quaint rural town, one obviously wealthy and well maintained. I had no trouble finding indications of the local mushroom industry, however, including a prominent mushroom museum along U.S. Route 1. There were images of mushrooms just about everywhere, but there were no signs of, or allusions to, how the mushrooms were harvested and by

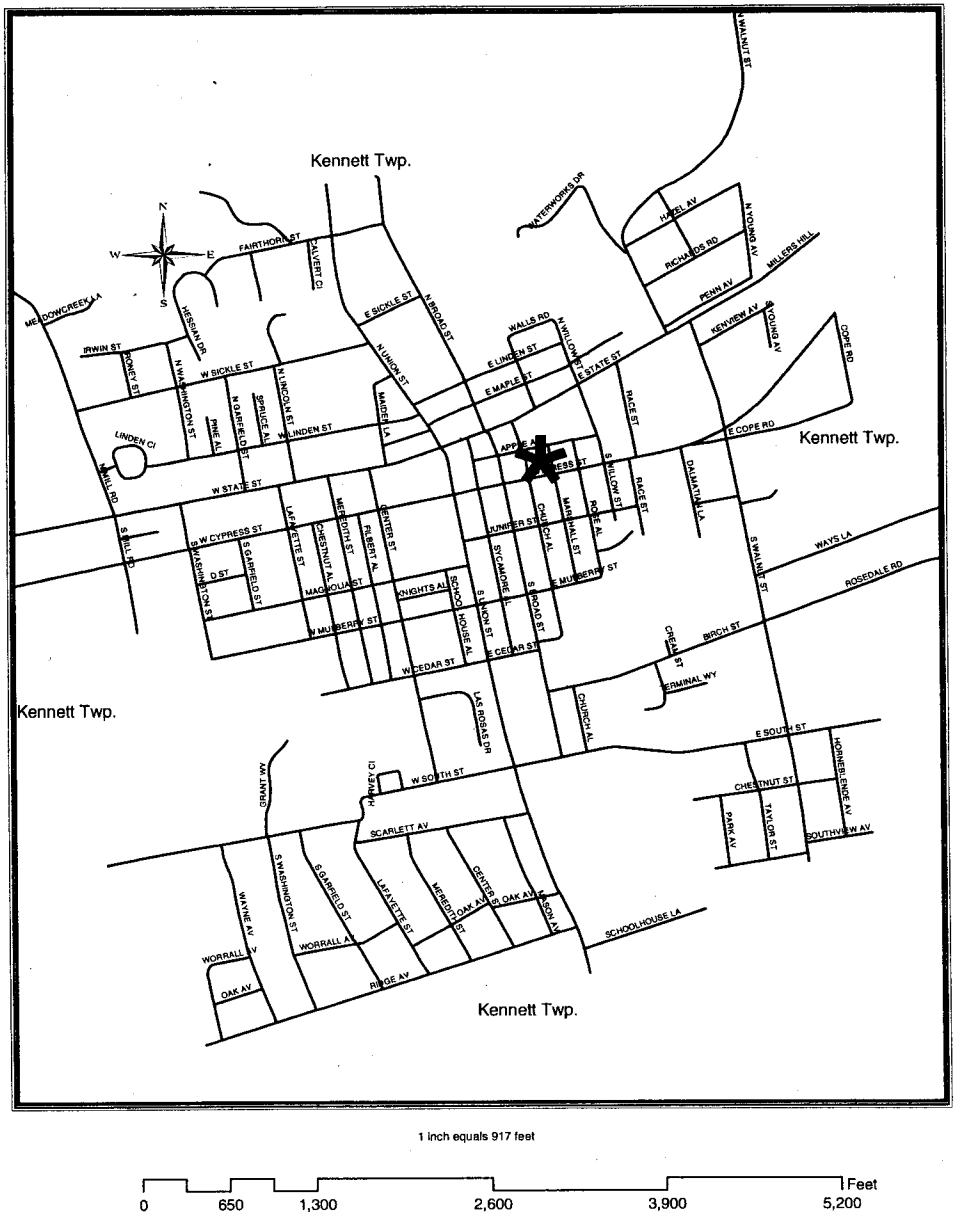


Figure 1. Borough of Kennett Square

whom. When I returned to Philadelphia that afternoon, I called Dona and told her that she must have been mistaken; there were no Mexicans in Kennett Square. She chuckled and said, "Now you know why the Mexicans are known as Chester County's best-kept secret."

During the following months I returned to Kennett Square often, and through my persistence I eventually discovered where Mexican settlers lived and worked. I had come to Kennett expecting to find seasonal migrant workers, mainly young men, who had come to work and left their families in Mexico. Instead, I found a growing population of Mexican families who had decided to settle permanently in Kennett Square, as well as a number of single men who were migrating seasonally but also considering moving their families north. At that time, most of the Mexican residents of the village lived in trailers; some lived in the dilapidated apartments on the edge of town. Single men most often bunked in farm barracks, tucked neatly away from the casual observer. They were living in Kennett but were not part of the town in any real sense.

Although Mexican residents seemed invisible, I realized that their marginal place in Kennett Square was part of a historical precedent for mushroom workers in the town. Like other communities in the United States that depend on migrant farm labor, the Kennett Square workforce has historically consisted of persons who have few employment options. Mushrooming, like other forms of agricultural production, is a labor-intensive endeavor and requires a steady supply of able-bodied laborers who are willing to work all night in the dark, dank buildings where mushrooms are grown. Thus it is not surprising that the workforce historically has drawn from recently arrived immigrants and the working poor: Italians at the turn of the century, African Americans, low-income Caucasians from Appalachia, then Puerto Ricans, and most recently, Mexican nationals from the state of Guanajuato (Bustos 1994a,b; Garcia 1997).[31]

Kennett Square is situated thirty miles southwest of Philadelphia and twenty miles west of Wilmington, Delaware. Located in Chester County, one of Pennsylvania's wealthiest counties, Kennett Square has been the home of the nation's largest commercial mushroom industry for the last century. Despite its rural ambiance and history as a farming community, Kennett Square is a sophisticated town that is home to a

number of upscale boutiques and restaurants and maintains its own symphony orchestra. The village is approximately one square mile, and it is home to 5,273 residents of whom 1,154 were Mexican (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).[32] Politically, Kennett Square, like surrounding Chester County, is known as a conservative community and Republican Party stronghold. Founded as a Quaker settlement in 1855, Kennett also has a local reputation of being a more socially progressive community than its neighbors, a point that is frequently emphasized by local residents. Locally produced histories of the town, for example, often emphasize the role the community played in the Underground Railroad (Taylor 1998, 1999; Kashatus 2003).

Kennett Square is governed by an elected borough council, which in turn selects the mayor (a non-salaried official).[33] Kennett Square was an aging town, with 75 percent of the population eighteen years of age or older (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Of the 3,621 students enrolled in the Kennett Consolidated School District in 2000–2001, 68 percent were white, 24 percent Hispanic/Latino, 5 percent African American, and 3 percent unspecified. Kennett's diversity, a point of pride for many local residents, stands in stark contrast to the neighboring Unionville/Chadds Ford School District.[34] In the same year, that student body consisted of 95 percent white, 2.89 percent Asian American, 1.3 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 0.76 percent African American students (Pennsylvania Department of Education Statistics 2000–2001).

The first large-scale mushroom farm in Kennett Square was owned and operated by J. B. Swayne in the late 1800s. Swayne's business was successful, and his neighbors in the county began to follow his lead—initially producing mushrooms in converted greenhouses that were adapted to the needs of mushrooms. More mushrooms are produced within a ten-mile radius of the town than in any comparable place in the world, which is why it is known as the "Mushroom Capital" (Weiss 1995: 6J).

Modern mushroom farms are referred to as "mushroom houses." They are windowless single-story cinder block buildings equipped with elaborate temperature and humidity controls, which make the air in the mushroom houses dank and stale year-round. Mushroom cultivation requires a dark cool environment and the malodorous mushroom soil.

The soil is seeded with mushroom spores, from which the mushrooms grow (Weiss 1995: 6J). When they are ready for harvest, pickers must clear all the mushrooms from the house in one day. Most mushroom houses consist of three tiers (from ground level to eight feet above). Though this arrangement allows for the maximum growth area in each house, it makes the job of cutting the mushrooms physically demanding. Workers must both stoop and climb as they pick mushrooms, all the while balancing on narrow catwalks or standing astride two beds while they pick mushrooms on the higher tiers. In general, mushroom pickers reported being paid by the bucket (approximately five gallons of mushrooms) rather than the hour. The men reported that they preferred this arrangement, as it enabled a fast picker to earn more money. The mushroom pickers, or "hongeros," I interviewed reported making between $8 and $10 per hour and working between twelve and fourteen hours in one shift, six to seven days per week.[35]

When I began this project in the mid-1990s, mushrooms were the number one cash crop in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as they are today (Clark 1994: 1; Stefanou 2008). But Kennett Square's success as a mushroom producer has little to do with some of the common reasons that regions become successful in agriculture: it is neither the climate nor the soil that makes mushroom production amenable to this part of Pennsylvania. Rather, it is its location, near the largest market of mushroom consumers in the country—the Boston to Washington, DC, corridor—that makes Kennett Square and the surrounding county an ideal location for mushroom production (Redd 1994: 19). At the time of this study, there were approximately eighty farms in the Kennett Square area, which produced 40–45 percent of the mushrooms consumed in the United States (Clark 1994: 1).

Mexican migration into the community began as early as 1958 and evolved into a steady pattern of seasonal migration to the area between 1968 and 1972 (Lattanzi Shutika 2005).[36] Beginning in the late 1960s, Kennett Square and the surrounding county saw a slow but steady increase in the population of Mexican men who have come to work in the mushroom industry. Then, in the late 1980s, the population of Mexican settlers surged dramatically, as women and children began reuniting with

their husbands. The majority of Mexicans working in Kennett are from the industrial town of Textitlán, Guanajuato.

For years, Kennett Square residents viewed having men who would travel into Kennett during the peak mushrooming months between October and March as an acceptable and a desirable consequence of being the hometown of a thriving agribusiness. The majority of the laborers between 1968 and 1990 were men who were housed out of sight on farm property in trailers or barracks, where they worked, ate, and lived together. While many of these men worked in Kennett for years, sometimes for a decade or more, their families and lives remained in Mexico. In this sense, although they were an essential part of the mushroom industry, most of them never considered Kennett Square "home." Oral histories I collected from the earliest migrants to Kennett emphasize that their lives were entirely work centered.[37] At times working twenty hours a day, seven days a week, these men accepted the hardships and poor working conditions as a matter of course. One migrant recalled his early years as an *honguero* (mushroom picker): "I worked hard, my life here was pure work, but I knew it would end. I could rest at home [in Mexico] and I would have money for my family" (Camacho interview January 20, 2000).

These seasonal migrants fit well into the hierarchical social structure of Kennett Square. In this sense, the local body politic has always situated the Mexican labor force in a liminal position in the community, a place that has been more or less rigidly fixed. Migrant workers were routinely excluded from community events, like the annual Mushroom Festival. "We knew our place well," said former *honguero* Joel Luna of his early years in Kennett Square on the fringe of the community (quoted in Corchado 1999: 1). Mexicans "belonged" to fulfill a specific purpose, picking mushrooms, but otherwise they were considered transients, and therefore were never intended to be fully accepted members of the local community. Similarly, most of these men never intended to stay.

After they received amnesty and legal permanent residency in 1986, many of the then-seasonal migrants elected to settle in Kennett Square and the surrounding county, and shortly thereafter were joined by their wives and children. Why did these seasonal workers decide to bring their families north? Settling in Kennett Square became an attractive

option for these men, and for Mexican migrant workers throughout the United States. Durand et al. (1999) note that the IRCA offered these seasonal migrants the possibility of establishing a secure and legal family and work life in the United States at a time of severe inflation and unemployment in Mexico. Similarly, the IRCA included several provisions that compelled former migrants to stay in the United States for extended periods, such as English and civics classes that were required in order to obtain their permanent legal residency papers (Durand et al. 1999, 2000). Innovations in mushrooming allowed more farms to offer year-round employment; these events coalesced to transform the long-established seasonal migration pattern in Kennett Square into widespread settlement of former migrant workers and their families.[38]

Since 2001, the Mexican population has transformed considerably. Most notably, there have been younger, undocumented families moving into the area. These men and women are often the children of career migrants. In many cases, their parents were legal permanent residents of the United States, but these adult children were not able to procure work visas. They have decided to live permanently in Pennsylvania with the hope that they will have an opportunity to become legal residents in the future. Although their stories are important, their arrival began just as my fieldwork was ending. For this reason, I have not included them as part of this study.

TEXTITLÁN, GUANAJUATO: *PUEBLO TEXTÍL* (TEXTILE PUEBLO)

Textitlán, the original home of many Kennett Square workers, sits at the far southwest corner of the state of Guanajuato. The *municipio* (county)[39] consists of a central pueblo (village) surrounded by some thirty rural farming communities called *ranchos*. The pueblo hosts a population of forty-eight thousand (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informatica de Mexico 2000) and is home to a thriving garment industry. Textitlán was founded in 1805 as an unincorporated settlement. The territory had been part of the Purépecha (Tarascan) territory, but indigenous

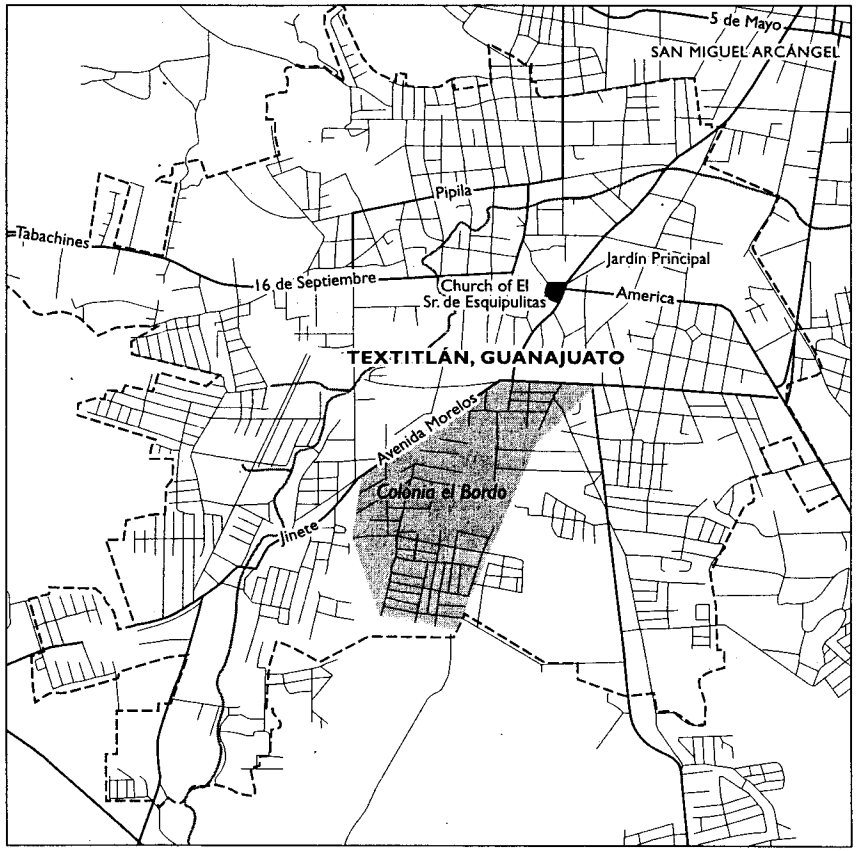


Figure 2. Textitlán, Guanajuato Mexico, and Colonia El Bordo

peoples had moved out of the area well before the nineteenth-century resettlement began.

Textitlán is known throughout the Mexican republic as a producer of the *rebozo*, the traditional shawl worn by Mexican women. In the 1980s, local rebozo producers began expanding their textile production to include acrylic fabric for sweaters and children's apparel. Within a decade Textitlán became one of the leading manufacturers of domestic apparel in Mexico (Gúzman-Zavala 1985).

The garment industry has transformed the pueblo into a major industrial center, drawing thousands of Mexicans from neighboring states and municipalities to purchase clothing for personal use or for sale in retail stores in other parts of Mexico. The textile and garment industries have made Textitlán one of the wealthiest municipios in the state of Guanajuato, and there is little doubt that cash earned in the United States helped develop and sustain these industries. Although wages for textile laborers and seamstresses during the time of this study were high, ranging between 800 and 1,000 pesos per week ($80–$100 U.S.), the wages earned in the United States by migrants were still significantly higher. For this reason, many of the owners of textile and garment businesses are former migrants who worked in the United States long enough to raise money to initiate, or in some cases expand, their businesses.

In many respects, Textitlán is atypical of migrant sending communities in Mexico.[40] For now it is important to understand that the success of the garment industry makes it possible for residents of Textitlán (Textitlanecos) to live a relatively comfortable life in Mexico. Thus the decisions that Textitlanecos make as they move north are usually prompted by factors other than poverty. These include raising money to build a house or capital to start a business, but perhaps most significantly, many of the Mexican settlers in Kennett Square have expressed a desire to transcend the social and economic hierarchy into which they were born. The Textitlanecos whom I have met in Kennett Square could be described as distinctly ambitious; the fact that most do not need to migrate to move out of poverty is something that I believe colors their ongoing relationships with their homeland.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Beyond the Borderlands's ethnographic present spanned the years from 1995 to 2005, the main period of my fieldwork and the height of conflict over Mexican settlement and the debate about migration in public life in Kennett Square. This time frame also coincided with the bicentennial of the founding of Textitlán, which ushered in a three-year period of celebrations

and homecomings as well as debate about the pueblo's identity as a migrant community. Because it would be difficult to understand the everyday challenges of Mexicans living in the United States without a clear understanding of their homeland, I begin the book by describing essentially the midpoint of my fieldwork. The process of living alongside returning families, becoming a participant in their homecomings, and experiencing Textitlán firsthand illuminated my own understandings and insights to Mexican experiences in Pennsylvania. In Mexico I had expected the settlers' way of life to be a sharp contrast to what I had observed in Pennsylvania, but as I followed these women and men to their home community I was able to witness their efforts to re-emplace themselves in their natal community, observe the local conflict between migrants and their non-migrating neighbors, and become accustomed to the daily rhythms of the village. After I got back to the United States I also felt the pull to return to Textitlán, an experience that many Mexican settlers in Kennett Square had described during my previous years of fieldwork.

This account begins in Textitlán with my first long-term introduction to this community during the holiday season from December 1999 through March 2000. It historicizes the influence of immigration in this small industrial pueblo from the Bracero era (1942–1964) to 2005, examining how it emerged as a prosperous industrial town as a result of a strong entrepreneurial spirit and remittances from the United States. Chapter 2 offers an in-depth look at everyday life in Textitlán, outlining the history of the pueblo and the emergence of its prosperous garment industry. It also examines the relationships of Textitlán's residents in relation to the United States, as well as the social relationships between migrating and non-migrating neighbors. Drawing upon statistical data collected in 1999, this chapter presents a detailed portrait of migration and family life, but it is not a "data chapter" that relies primarily on statistical analysis. Rather, it is a statistically informed ethnographic account of Textitlán that is interspersed with historical data I gathered from oral histories and the pueblo's archival sources.

Chapter 3 explores issues of home and homecoming and the structure of migrant emplacement and belonging through *casas vacías*, vacant or abandoned houses. Many migrants leave their homes uninhabited for

years while they work in the United States, but rarely are the houses empty. Instead, they are fully furnished and are maintained by a nonmigrating family member who visits, cleans, and watches over the house regularly. While Textitlanecos are settling with their families in Pennsylvania, the casas vacías represent a material tie to their community and reveal much about the way the concept of "home" is defined by families who have settled in the United States. These houses play an important role in the lives of Mexicans who use the structures to maintain connections and develop social and familiar ties with their communities on both sides of the border.

The next two chapters return to the early years of Mexican settlement in Pennsylvania from 1995 to 1999, a time when Kennett's citizen population could no longer ignore the influence of the Mexican residents in their community. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth examination of daily life of Mexicans in Kennett Square and the emerging sense of place. It identifies three distinct periods of Mexican emplacement and belonging: Early Settlement and the Evolution of the New Destination (1994–1998), Being and Belonging (1999–2000), and finally Adaptation and Incorporation (2001–2005). It also describes how Mexican families negotiated their place in Kennett Square and eventually were able to restructure their social and cultural worlds and develop a sense of belonging.

Chapter 5 examines Kennett Square's English-speaking population's influences on Mexican belonging through organized social action, particularly through an exploration of the origins and effects of the grassroots social movement Bridging the Community. The Bridging movement was formed in response to community protests against Mexican settlement and was conceived as a means to integrate the rapidly diversifying Kennett Square community. However, the English-only forums and organizational structure of the movement made it largely inaccessible to local Mexicans. Drawing on the Bridging example, I explore the relationship between collective identity and social action to demonstrate how the English-speaking community's notions of the local body politic shaped the social movement so that it reinforced the English-speaking population's dominant position in the community and had a limited influence on encouraging Mexican emplacement and belonging.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine the functions of the festival in creating belonging and a sense of place for Mexicans in Kennett Square and Textitlán. Chapter 6 explores the spiritual lives of Textitlanecos within the context of return migration. Although returning to Textitlán is much anticipated by those who live in the United States, the economic affluence of migrants makes their homecoming uncertain. Thousands of *hijos ausentes* (the town's absent sons and daughters) return to the pueblo, creating tension and a local challenge to the pueblo's elite citizens: wealthy business owners and professionals who have never migrated. This return is examined as a journey in which Textitlanecos come together through their shared devotion to Esquipulitas, the town's patron. By participating in the annual pilgrimage in honor of Esquipulitas, the pueblo is able to reunite as a single community and find a place for those who return during the fiesta season.

In Kennett Square, the Cinco de Mayo festival initiated in 2001 was promoted as a means of welcoming Mexican settlers as members of the community. Chapter 7 traces the history of the event, which provided a public means of demonstrating acceptance of Mexican settlers, and as such was a turning point in local ethnic relations. Although Kennett Square's American residents were in charge of organizing the Cinco de Mayo festival, it nevertheless provided an occasion for Mexicans to have access to the public life of the town. This facilitated the process of belonging and opened the possibility that Mexicans could shape the sense of place in Kennett Square. Three years after it was initiated, however, the organizers moved the festival from Kennett's main street to back alleys and parking lots. This move, along with other festival changes, reflected a growing ambivalence on the part of the English-speaking majority toward their Mexican neighbors and the place they will eventually have in the life of the community.

In exploring the translocal ties between Textitlán and Kennett Square, it is possible to develop a sense of the Mexican families and their lives, particularly the multifaceted experiences of these contemporary immigrants in new destinations and their ongoing relationships with their homeland. Like Kennett Square, the United States is in the midst of a transition, and with it comes a heated, and often reactionary, debate

about emigration from Mexico and Latin America. Amid the cries for radical changes to protect the nation's borders and the clamor to find the "roots" of local communities, there has been little substantial discussion about the changes in new destinations and what they mean for these communities.[41] Even less frequently discussed are the consequences the changes in these communities will bring to the nation.

As a nation of immigrants, the United States is at a crossroads. It has long been our custom to jealously guard our nation and local identities and to complain that the most recent group of newcomers threatens the very idea of American identity. Many communities across the United States today seem to be echoing the same message that immigrants at the turn of the early twentieth century also heard: you are too numerous, you are changing the very essence of American society, and we are not sure we want to accommodate you here. At the same time, there is a strong call by many to move these men and women quickly toward citizenship, assimilation, and ultimately to be more "like us."

As I reflect on the "border" that erupted in Herndon, and others that emerged in Manassas and other locations in the eastern United States that are so close to my home, I realize that yesterday's Kennett Square is in some ways today's Herndon or Manassas. Though we may anticipate where new destination communities will arise, it is less clear what potential local problems will spring up as a result. Kennett Square is not a perfect example of how a community should respond to a new destination settlement, but its story does provide many lessons about how these new immigrant communities can emerge and adapt. By examining the process of belonging for Mexicans in Kennett Square, *Beyond the Borderlands* also uncovers perhaps one of the less understood aspects of immigration: how newcomers find their places in their new home and maintain their places in the old and how the native-born population eventually adapts to their presence. Situated in the midst of national debate that seeks to determine the course of immigration to the United States for years to come, Kennett Square is an important example of how one community handled this transition. For other similar communities who are ready to face the reality of a changing and changed America, *Beyond the Borderlands* offers a model for how to approach the immigration "problem" and work toward creating a common belonging by understanding the translocal experiences common among Mexican immigrants in the United States today. In this sense, the story that follows is not a universal picture of what life in every new destination community might look like, but as Mexican (along with other Latino) populations increase in new places throughout the United States, it is likely that similar issues of place, identity, and belonging will emerge.

METHODOLOGY

This project began as a short-term undertaking, one that I expected to be a straightforward investigation into an emerging Mexican settlement in an unusual location. From this beginning, the project grew into a ten-year binational ethnographic study of belonging and the sense of place. It is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, oral history, and survey research. Because there were few book-length examinations of new destinations when I began, it was necessary to draw upon a number of research techniques to create a multilayered account of how the connections between the two communities affects belonging and the sense of place in each location.[42]

OBSERVATIONS

The ethnographic observations in Kennett Square were conducted between October 1995 and May 2001, with additional two- to three-day field visits in September 2001, May 2002, and May 2003. Although I returned to Kennett Square for these follow-up visits, my regular fieldwork in Kennett Square ended in May 2001 when I began systematic research in Textitlán.

In Kennett Square, the dispersed location of Mexican residents required that I select a number of field sites for observation. I began by observing the comings and goings of what was identified as the only community center, the migrant health clinic Project Salud, and the social service agency La Comunidad Hispana, which were housed in the same

building. Although neither facility offered programs or space for social activities, they were widely recognized by the Mexican population as the first place that most newly settled families would visit, particularly families. I also attended community meetings and forums that addressed issues that directly related to the Mexican settlement.

Because I am a registered nurse and was licensed to practice in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I was invited to observe in the office waiting rooms, to serve as an interpreter for English-speaking physicians during office visits, and to accompany community health workers during their outreach programs in the community. These informal observations were followed by a period of six months were I formally volunteered as part-time clinic nurse. When I was not working in the clinic, I conducted fieldwork in the apartment complexes where Mexican families lived, and when Buena Vista Townhomes opened in December 1998, I began fieldwork in that residential community as well. I continued to work in these sites until I left to conduct fieldwork in Mexico in December 1999. I returned from Mexico in March 2000 to complete fieldwork in Kennett Square through April 2001. Throughout my time in Kennett Square, I conducted fieldwork three to five days every week.

After my first field trip to Textitlán in 1999–2000, I made seven additional trips there for periods of one to four weeks to complete follow-up work during the times that immigrants are most likely to return: the fiesta season (January 8–31 each year) and during the summer months when their children are not in school. During these times I observed community events, including *jaripeos* (bull riding exhibitions), dances, masses, and street fairs. I was also invited to a number of private occasions hosted by Mexican families such as Christmas celebrations, posada processions, family dinners, birthday celebrations, and civil and religious wedding ceremonies.

INTERVIEWS

After a few weeks of observation in Kennett Square, I began to conduct formal tape-recorded interviews using a semi-structured instrument

that employed oral history interview techniques. The questionnaire elicited information about family history, migration history, social history, education history, and job history, as well as specific questions about living in the United States and Mexico. Though I asked all informants the same set of questions, the interviews were open-ended and ranged from forty-five minutes to three hours in duration. I used a modified questionnaire for U.S.-born informants that elicited family and community history as well as opinions about migration, the mushroom industry, and community change.

I completed a total of 103 interviews during the term of the project. Of that total, fifty-five were completed with Mexican informants who lived in Kennett Square and fourteen were with members of Kennett Square's English-speaking population. The majority of Mexican interview subjects, forty-eight in all, were first-generation setters in Kennett Square. I interviewed slightly more women than men, fifty-four and forty-nine, respectively, and when possible, I interviewed spouses together. The fourteen interviews conducted with the English-speaking included long- and short-term residents: people who had lived in and around Kennett Square for as few as six years and as long as an entire lifetime, with the longest being ninety-three years. This group included doctors, nurses, social service workers, current and retired mushroom farm owners, and Kennett Square teachers and principals.

In Textitlán, I completed twenty-two semi-structured interviews. Of that group, six informants had never migrated to the United States. I also completed an additional twelve comprehensive oral histories for a total of thirty-four interviews. These interviews followed the same questionnaire that I used in the United States. The majority of oral histories were conducted with informants who were over forty years of age and had been migrating between Textitlán and Kennett Square for at least ten years.[43]

All informants, unless otherwise noted, are identified using pseudonyms. In some cases, informants specifically asked that I use their real names and I have honored those requests here; others who are identified by their real names are local public figures who were quoted here from published accounts, but were also willing to grant interviews for the project.

SURVEY RESEARCH

I traveled to Textitlán, Guanajuato, for a week in September 1999 to find housing, then embarked on a three-month field trip between December 1999 and March 2000 to complete survey and ethnographic research with the assistance of Payal Gupta, then a sociology doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania. Working for the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) at the University of Pennsylvania and the Universidad de Guadalajara,[44] together we completed 168 household ethnosurveys of the work, migration, and family histories of a random sample of Textitlanecos who returned for the 1999–2000 holiday season, using the survey instrument and following the research protocols developed by the MMP.[45] The households were selected at random from a total of 1,440 households in the neighborhood where I was living.

The MMP employs an ethnosurvey instrument that follows a flexible semi-structured interview.[46] The MMP protocols stipulate that all researchers obtain identical information for each informant, but question wording and ordering are not fixed; the researcher is free to determine the precise phrasing and timing of each question based on the circumstances of the interview. The gathered information is cross-checked with local informants to ensure its validity.

The ethnosurvey elicited multiple types of information: basic social and demographic data for all people in the household and a year-by-year life history for household heads, including histories of childbearing, property and housing, business, and labor. It also collected information about the household head's most recent experiences in the United States, including border-crossing, relatives and friends who may have accompanied him or her, and relatives who are already present in the United States. Finally, the survey also elicited data on the household head's social ties with U.S. citizens, facility with the English language, occupational characteristics, and use of U.S. social services.

When the surveys were completed, they were sent to the Universidad de Guadalajara where they were coded by MMP staff. Once coded, the data were checked for informational and clerical errors. When all necessary corrections were completed, the data collected were released as part of the MMP 118 dataset, which includes two data files: the persfile, which includes individual level data and the housefile, which includes household level data. All of these data are available online at http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/.

ANALYSIS

The methods and procedures employed for this project produced different kinds of data that required several forms of data analysis. The taped interviews were transcribed and coded, and a content analysis of field notes and interview transcripts was completed. The majority of survey data points used for analyses were nominal in nature. For example, these data were used to determine whether or not a descriptive characteristic of Textitlán compared to its neighbor, San Miguel Arcángel. Thus, nonparametric analyses were required. For ordinal data, chi-square analyses were used. For the few data points for which arithmetic means could be calculated, t-test analyses were conducted. Higher order analyses were not employed for this data set.

Although I collected and refer to statistical data in this study, it is at its core an ethnographic account. The statistical data should be considered a supplement to, not a substitute for, the ethnographic data. Conducting the survey door-to-door was valuable in that it brought me into contact with informants from all walks of life in Textitlán. The combined analyses produced a series of themes and theoretical classifications that allowed me to reconstruct a more nuanced picture of Mexican life in Textitlán and Kennett Square, which further shed light on the multiple ways that belonging and the sense of place develop in the context of migration.

THREE La Casa Vacía

MEANINGS AND MEMORIES IN ABANDONED IMMIGRANT HOUSES

We can go home again, provided it has not been altered beyond recognition during our absence.

Yi-Fu Tuan, 1980: 470

I arrived in Textitlán for the first time in September 1999; I planned to rent a house. My family and I would begin what would become one of many research trips, and I was in need of a modest home that could accommodate us. I was able to find one home, still under construction and lacking a bathroom. The owner told me not to worry; I could walk across the street and shower at his house whenever I wanted. I imagined traipsing my three year-old twins to my landlord's home every day to bathe and decided to look elsewhere.

When I returned to my home in Pennsylvania, I began asking my informants in Kennett Square how I should go about looking for a house. I had worked with these families for several years, and they were enthusiastic about my upcoming trip and the opportunity to know their hometown. Of the eighteen families whom I knew well, fifteen had

homes that they had left behind in Mexico. Two of those fifteen families had extended family members living in their vacated homes, whereas the others had left their homes empty. Although they acknowledged that these houses were not in use, most of the owners were reluctant to rent them, although it was never clearly stated why that was the case. In the end, I did rent one of these empty homes. My landlord, Mario, seemed happy to let me rent the house, but his wife Ofelia seemed reluctant to let me have the home. At the time, they and their children had lived in the United States for five years and had not once returned to use the home.

When we arrived in Textitlán, I was relieved to learn that Mario and Ofelia's house was fully furnished and had a fully functioning kitchen with a stove, refrigerator, and sink.[1] Our transition was easier because the house was furnished, but it took a while to become accustomed to the peculiarities of the typical Mexican house. The drive to Textitlán from the main airport in Guanajuato took nearly three hours, and when we finally arrived in Textitlán, Ofelia's parents, Doña Elena and her husband Don Pedro, were there to greet us and show us the house, which we had rented sight unseen. The house was a simple two-story structure constructed of reinforced concrete beams and brick; the interior and exterior walls were painted stucco. Doña Elena explained that there was no telephone, as the house had been empty for five years. The gas for the stove and water heater were supplied via portable propane tanks that were located on the back patio. She had purchased a new tank, which she assured me should last for two to three months. To conserve fuel, she recommended that the small hot water heater, which looked more like a toy than a hot water source for an entire household, be turned on only when we were ready to shower.

The household water supply for cleaning and bathing was housed in a large *tinaco* (tank) located on the roof of the house; someone would pass by every morning selling potable water in large plastic jugs. "You'll hear the man in the street calling, '¡*Agua*! ¡*Agua*!,'" Doña Elena explained. "Just go to the door and tell him you want water and he'll bring it to you." The water in the tinaco would be replenished during the night when the *municipio* (county) pumped water through the pipes to individual

houses.[2] Water was pumped every day except Tuesday and Friday, she cautioned us, so we would have to be careful to conserve water those days. She casually recommended that we check the tank every morning, however, to confirm how much water was available before taking our showers. "This is a two-story house," Don Pedro warned us. "Sometimes the water pressure won't be strong enough to fill the tinaco." When I asked what we should do when there was no water, Doña Elena patted my hand and said we were welcome to come to her house to shower if need be, and then nimbly led me up a narrow two-story staircase (with no railing) to the roof of the house to show me the tinaco and how to check the water level.

Doña Elena then handed me a ring with four keys, one to the front door and to each door on the first floor. Most Mexican homes are configured in a curious but pleasantly open architectural style. This means much of the "inside" of the house is open air, so that once you step out of a room into the hall you often find yourself standing "outside" in a roofless passageway, as was the case with our house. This architectural style bodes well for the temperate dry climate, and for this reason Mexican homes in Textitlán have no central air conditioning or heating. The openness also can be unpleasantly cold during the nights throughout the winter months when temperatures drop to the high thirties. The open nature of the house design also means that an intruder can enter the house over the garden wall, which is the reason for having a key for each room's sturdy steel door. Doña Elena recommended that I lock the doors to all of the rooms when we left the house, just to be safe.

My memories of our first few days in the house would be a blur were it not for my field diary. There I documented that our most pressing household problem was a lack of water, as it appeared that it was more common for the tinaco to stay empty than to fill. This meant Ken and I spent considerable time packing our toiletries and children in order to head to Doña Elena's house to bathe. I asked my neighbors if there was anything that could be done about the water, and they suggested that I hire a plumber to install a small pump that would provide the additional pressure needed to get the water to the roof. Then a few days later Ken and I woke up to the sound of falling water and assumed it

was raining. December is not the rainy season, we later learned, and it was extremely unlikely to get rain at that time of year. The running water was our tinaco overflowing, the result of a broken shut-off valve. I dressed quickly and ran up the street to find Don Pedro to help us fix the problem while the elderly woman who lived next door scolded my husband for wasting water; she did not yet realize that Ken did not speak Spanish and could not understand anything she was saying. Don Pedro arrived a few minutes later, and after talking to our neighbor and assuring her he would fix the problem, he went off to find a plumber. Within an hour we had the valve repaired and from that day forward we had water.

The everyday difficulties we experienced living in a Mexican house were not uncommon. My neighbors commiserated about the water problems and explained that most new houses were built with cisterns under the first floor, thus overriding the gravity problem. They also acknowledged that with our rented house, long unused and also not up to date, we should expect difficulties keeping things running smoothly. As we settled in and became accustomed to the idiosyncrasies of the house, we adjusted, although during some weeks it seemed that every day brought a new peculiarity to which we had to adapt. Our house was located on a main street, which meant that we had to retreat to the back of the house to escape the noise of cars and motos rumbling along the busy street. It was a nuisance to have to constantly monitor the propane tank, but the delivery trucks passed by two or three times a day with their distinctive music booming through the neighborhood to alert everyone that they were on their way. Retrieving a new tank was as simple as standing on one's front stoop and signaling the drivers, who would then stop and connect the gas tank in less than five minutes.

Don Pedro and Doña Elena found my questions about running the house comical and sometimes exasperating. When our gas tank did finally run out unexpectedly at the end of our third week in the house, I went to Don Pedro to inquire how I could buy another, as I had failed to notice the gas trucks in the street that morning. It was midday and my household had ceased to function; our gas stove was useless and although we had water, there was no means to heat it. Don Pedro had bad

news, however. The Mexican Republic was in the midst of a propane shortage. "There is no gas," he said simply. It took me a moment to take in his meaning; then my American sensibilities kicked in and I asked, "Who can I talk to? Surely there is some way for us to get a tank of gas." Don Pedro just shook his head and replied, "Débora, when there is gas the trucks come around playing their music and you can call for them to make a delivery. Did you notice there was no music this morning? When there is no music, there is no gas."

As we became accustomed to living in a Mexican home, I was also troubled by another aspect of the house: particularly the fact that the house looked as if someone else were still living there. I was unsettled by the perfect order I encountered in the house when we arrived. The bed was dressed with coordinated bedspread and drapes, there was a white lace tablecloth on the kitchen table, and there were several large live plants on the patio and balcony. The walls were also decorated with family photos, including Mario and Ofelia's wedding portrait and school photos of each of their children.

Why would the house look like this? I wondered. I worried that Mario and Ofelia had planned to return to Mexico for the holidays, and perhaps they changed their plans to accommodate me. In the midst of survey research I began to realize that my rental house was not at all atypical. In fact, I was struck that some 16 percent of the homes in my survey community were casas vacías and, like the home I was renting, most of these failed to bear the marks of an uninhabited house.

It was almost impossible to determine whether or not a house was a casa vacía from the street. This is because the majority of these houses were meticulously maintained. In fact, the only way to positively determine that a house was vacant was to ask a neighbor. During my survey research I could determine the casa vacía from other homes by knocking on the door. Inevitably a neighbor came out and asked me if I was looking for the homeowner. When I replied that I was, the neighbor told me that the owners were living in the United States and almost always referred me to the person responsible for the home, usually extended family members. These caretakers rarely lived in the house but often would visit (sometimes daily, usually weekly) to check on the house, and more

important, to maintain the appearance that the house was occupied. Thus began my interest in the casa vacía and my curiosity regarding why Mexican families, who occupy the lower rung of the socioeconomic ladder in the United States, would hold onto their Mexican houses that they rarely, if ever, used.

The casa vacía is often accounted for in survey research; it is used to determine the influence of U.S-Mexico migration in Mexican communities. Yet these structures have never been studied in their own right. Nestled in urban and rural communities, these houses represent more than an economic imperative to work away from home. These houses are homes, albeit empty homes, but nevertheless they play an important role in the lives of Mexicans who use the structures to maintain connections and develop social and familiar ties with their communities on both sides of the border.

Casa vacías take many forms, from rural farm properties to urban mansions. The importance of these houses was not immediately obvious but was obscured by their lack of occupancy. Unlike many other forms of expressive material culture such as clothing, photos, and automobiles, these houses are the centerpiece of premigration family life and memory and hold strong emotional attachments for the men and women who have migrated and settled in the United States. This is why, I later realized, my informants were hesitant to rent their homes to me. These houses are more significant than any other aspect of their material culture and represent the immigrants' place in their natal community. These houses have been left, but casa vacías are much more than abandoned houses. The meanings that are attributed to these houses by migrants and those who have remained in Textitlán further calls into question the understandings of the concept of home, and by extension, the sense of belonging.

HOUSES FAR FROM HOME

Among the places that a person can occupy on a given day, the home carries perhaps the most significant emotional weight. Home is a person's

starting point at the beginning of each day and it is the place one returns to at day's end. Many people see their homes as the center of their emotional and familial worlds. But what does it mean when you say you are "at home"? Home is an abstract signifier that calls to mind a wide variety of associations and meanings. Most commonly, home refers to a person's primary place of residence, but it is also used to express the essence of emplaced experience, or belonging. When home is used to reference a house, it is often meant as the key dwelling from which all other places are compared (Manzo 2003). Feelings of "at-homeness" are the "usually unnoticed, taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable in, and familiar with, the everyday world in which one lives and outside of which one is visiting" (Segert 1985: 287, quoted in Manzo 2003: 49). The ideas of home and feeling at home are deeply linked to sentiments of belonging, acceptance, and emplacement.

Drawing from the idea of home as a particular dwelling place, it is also often used to signify feelings of security and comfort. These associations are directly related to the primacy of home as the quintessential place in human experience. In essence, home becomes a landscape that provides the setting for the expression and development of the self. In its most idealized conceptions, home can be the one place where a person can freely express him- or herself without fear of rejection or censure; "being at home" is also commonly defined as being your true or authentic self.

The aforementioned associations among home, the self, security, and comfort centered in a specific structure (or house) often blend together to create an archetypical image of home. This image is often linked to a specific structure; in fact it is rare to think of "home" without referencing a specific house. Although these meanings of home appear fixed and set, in reality home is a rather malleable concept. The ideas and associations of home do not necessarily have anything to do with the actual place in which one resides. Mexicans in Kennett Square have settled and in many cases bought houses in Pennsylvania. Although they are building their lives in Pennsylvania, they often express a limited attachment to their United States houses and lifestyles that are in a sense their "houses far from home" (Rodman 2001).

This is due in part to the culture shock common when settling in Kennett Square, a place that is completely foreign to most Mexicans who settle there. The inconsistent acceptance of the Mexican population by its citizen neighbors also contributes to this. When I asked Mexicans in Kennett Square about the idea of their home or where they felt most at home, often the response was "Mexico."[3] Nations, neighborhoods, and local communities can also reference the idea of "home," but during my fieldwork in Mexico I found that "home" was not just their homeland or pueblo; it also referenced a specific house, albeit a vacant house. "Home" in this instance is not the place where they currently live but where they once lived full-time. This is true of Mexicans who have arrived in Kennett Square recently and those who have lived there for years.[4]

This fact was brought forth time and again during my fieldwork in Mexico. When I was living in Mexico I took my children to visit my friend, Mercedes Gonzales. I had been alone in Mexico with the children for nearly a month, and I desperately wanted to take a day off and spend time with Mercedes. The journey to the neighboring municipio required that we take three different buses and a taxi to the rural farming community el Tigre. We had traveled nearly two hours when we finally arrived at her home. El Tigre is a quiet *rancho* (rural community) where neighbors live in close proximity and the homesteads are surrounded by acres of pastureland and cornfields. It was a warm Sunday afternoon and I remember feeling relieved and happy to see Mercedes and her family. She and I sat out in her garden talking, and she said, "It feels so good to be back in my own home." She smiled and sat back in her chair relishing the beautiful afternoon.

Mercedes' house was spacious and comfortable with what appeared to be a recently renovated kitchen and bathroom. The large, open garden was overtaken with weeds. Mercedes lamented that the garden was unkempt and recalled the many flowers she had once cultivated there. As we visited, I ask her how long it had been since she had been back to Mexico. She said, "This is the first time we've been here since we moved to the United States. I've sent the children back to see their grandparents, but I haven't been here for four years." The house had sat empty during that time but was maintained by her in-laws in her absence. When she

returned to the house, it was, with the exception of the garden, just as she left it. It was well maintained and awaiting her presence.

Why does the casa vacía continue to signify "home" for Mercedes and other Mexican men and women who have settled in Kennett Square? The answer to this question is not straightforward, but it lies in the significance that Mexican settlers attribute to their Mexican properties, which is much deeper and lasting than what many Americans would attribute to a domicile. The home provides a private space and refuge for family members; it is a place of safety as the house protects its inhabitants from the real or perceived dangers of the outside world. This became apparent as I observed the courtship customs of Mexican youth. In Textitlán, young men and women do not typically "date." When a young man is interested in courting a young woman, he is often required to visit the girl at her home. These visits may take place in the home or on the sidewalk just outside the front door but always within the protective space of the girl's home where parents or other family members can oversee the couple's interaction.[5]

In addition to the idea of protection, the home also represents identity. For most people, the creation and maintenance of personal space is an essential aspect of their identity. Humans exist in the social worlds they create, in the families, friends and communities that are linked through a shared culture. We live our lives some*place*. Humans are also most at ease in the places where their lives are formed and are correspondingly malleable to the individual's influence. Home in this sense is an expression of personal power and autonomy. It is true that the "home" of comfort and essential identity may also be a source of dissatisfaction or disillusionment for some, but most often it is the one place where life feels under the individual's control.[6] In this regard the casa vacía is a signifier of belonging, of being deeply and ineluctably connected to a place.

My experiences with Mercedes and other Mexican families emphasized an important and seemingly simple lesson for me: our homes are more than the places where we lay our heads at night. They are the primary location of emplacement and belonging for human existence, where we feel most at ease. It is the place where we start off from and it is the

place we return to at the end of each day, or in the case of Mexicans in Pennsylvania, it is the place they return as often as they can afford to do so. Home is a "still point in a turning world, an irreplaceable center of human significance and experience" (Porteous and Smith 2001: 34).

In Kennett Square the mushroom farm owners often dread the end of the year when the pull to return home is the strongest. The numbers of workers returning home typically creates a seasonal labor shortage, as retired farm owners Vince Ghione and John Swain recalled. "I was so embarrassed a few years ago," Ghione said. "A guy [told me he] was going back for Christmas, and I was furious. He's a good man. And he . . . I was talking foolish. [The Mexican supervisor was translating] . . . . And I'm going, 'You can't go home for Christmas because everybody's leaving.' Most of them want to go back at the end of the year. And [the Mexican supervisor] gets it translated back to me, he [the mushroom worker] hasn't been back all year and he has five children. I felt about this big" [making gesture of about one inch between his index finger and thumb].[7]

"The dreaded words," Swain added, "I'm going home for Christmas." These words that can anger or dismay farm owners represent the long-awaited reprieve for mushroom pickers. Jesús Juárez came to the United States for the first time in 1972 at the age of eighteen and returned every three years, saying, "I went back for a couple of months each time. I was here alone and wanted to see my family."[8]

Although it is understandable that men who are separated from their families would want to return home, the longing to return home to Mexico is great even when their nuclear families live together in the United States. Narratives of home, exile, and return are common among these settlers, and although they actively build their lives and set down roots in Pennsylvania, it is not uncommon for them to hold onto their idea of home as Textitlán rather than Kennett Square.

This desire to return to Mexico allows settlers to maintain connections to extended family members and to renew their lifelong friendships to which they were accustomed in their natal community. Similarly, given the lack of social activities available to Mexicans in Kennett Square, it makes sense that they wish to return to the place where they

find comfort in the company of their families, friends, and extended social lives.

The desire to return to Textitlán, however, accomplishes more than reconnections with loved ones. For migrants and settlers going through the complicated process of finding a place to belong in the United States, the knowledge that they have a home elsewhere is comforting. Textitlanecos engage in a number of narrative practices that recall home and homeland. They recall memories of their times at home, particularly in contrast to the lives they live in Pennsylvania. In the process, these narratives represent an important means of creating a symbolic place to which they can retreat during difficult times in the United States. Holding onto their homes provides a sense of assurance and stability in times of uncertainty. But for this to be an effective retreat, there have to be actual times when they return to Mexico, and when they return, they have to have someplace to go. Herein lies another instance of the meaning of "home," compressed beyond the idea of homeland or hometown: the actual homeplace.

The most surprising aspect of the casas vacías is not their numbers but their significance to the full-time residents of Texitlán. For the typical United States resident, the idea of having several empty or abandoned houses in one neighborhood elicits images of decay and neglect, such as those associated with America's abandoned urban neighborhoods or depopulated rural communities. Houses rarely sit empty in thriving neighborhoods. When their owner-occupants depart, the houses are sold or rented and new occupants join the neighborhood and larger community.

In the streets of Texitlán, the casas vacías are rarely identifiable as uninhabited dwellings; they are no more likely to be in disrepair than any other house on the street, and rarely will neighbors see these empty homes as a problem. Casas vacías are most often described as a natural consequence of migrating and settling in the United States. This trend is reflected in the current research on international migration, which has recently shifted away from thinking of migrant workers or immigrants as people who come to work and then stay and toward thinking of migration as a transnational process that involves a series of journeys

between sending and receiving communities.[9] This is particularly true of Textitlanecos who are not so much residents of either Texitlán or Kennett Square but are journeyers who make the passage between Mexico and the United States, never completely forsaking one place or the other. In describing Textitlanecos as transnational settlers, it is not to say that they live their lives provisionally in the United States or Mexico. They are not transients. Indeed, their lives are lived in Pennsylvania as if they were not ever going to move again. Their personal narratives are often permeated with a desire to return to Mexico, but most are in the process of building permanent lives in Pennsylvania and are buying houses, rearing their children, and sometimes becoming citizens. Yet even so, they maintain their houses in Mexico.

Conversely, some Textitlanecos return home with the intention that they will not return to the United States. They settle into different jobs and rejoin life in their hometown. Lilia Ramírez, whose father and brothers all migrated at one time to the United States to work, spoke of her brother Ramón who had recently returned to Mexico and vowed never to return north. "He says he's not going back, that he doesn't like living in el Norte," she recalled, "but when he needs money, or a new car or wants to buy a house, I expect he'll have to go back."[10] He remained in Textitlán for three years, but recently returned to Pennsylvania with his wife (a Mexican-American woman whose parents were born in Textitlán) and newborn son.

At first, the idea of people living in the United States while maintaining homes in Mexico might seem paradoxical, but the casas vacías make life for Mexican migrants in the United States more comfortable.[11] In the process of making their journeys north and back again, they have kept their homes in the center of their existence. Homes are repositories of family experience and therefore memory, but they are also emblematic of the hoped-for future as well as the "accumulation of each past day" (Mackie 1981, quoted in Porteous and Smith 2001: 43). In this case, the hope is tied to a desire to live comfortably in their homeland without financial worries. So what appears to be a provisional commitment to living in the United States is actually a desire to maintain connection to the natal community while building a life in Pennsylvania. It is a way to

exist in two places simultaneously and is the way that many of the Kennett Mexicans are most comfortable shaping their lives after settling in the United States.

The home is also a vehicle families commonly use to express their identity through the manipulation of personal space and external appearance. Unlike other aspects of an individual's or family's material culture, the house "reflects how the individual sees himself, how he wishes to see himself, or how he wishes others to see him" (Porteous 1976: 384). The homes of migrants, much like the homes of families in the United States, are a means through which families can demonstrate their economic success and personal taste. It is not uncommon to draw conclusions about a family based on the type of home they own or occupy. Similarly, the Mexican home is the location of family autonomy through the maintenance of household "rules" of interpersonal behavior. Although house rules may be contested, there is comfort in simply knowing how one is expected to act, and this in turn feeds into the security that householders feel when they are "at home."

HOMES AND MEMORIALIZATION

More than a guardian of personal safety, the house is also a repository of memory, through lived experience and the accumulation of experiences and personal objects that are collected over a lifetime. The daily experiences that constitute a life are fleeting, yet humans are compelled to relive and recall the commonplace events through narrative exchanges with others. The stories one shares regarding personal events reconstitute individual experiences for the teller as well as for those who listen. In the process of creating a story of daily life, what was once fleeting gains a measure of durability (Tuan 1980). Similarly, artifacts and personal objects can embody meaningful human experience and become the "objects of memory" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989). The significance of the personal objects that adorn or clutter a home is that they are used to reconstruct a narrative past. This is because domestic interiors are repositories of objects that have accompanied their owners over the years.

"These *material companions* to a life are valued for their continuity. . . . [Personal artifacts] accumulate meaning and value by sheer dint of their constancy in life" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989: 330).

Typically, the material objects that one sees as especially significant—family photos, souvenirs, and mementos—are objects that are likely to move with a person when they leave one residence for another. However, in the case of the casas vacias, the personal objects that adorn the home are left intact, as was obvious during my first weeks in Mexico. This practice of leaving one's house as an object of memory was illustrated by my neighbor, Maria. A few days after I arrived in Textitlán, Maria received word that her documents for permanent residency in the United States had arrived, and her husband Ángel returned to escort her and their children to Ciudad Juarez to retrieve their papers. It was an exciting time. She and Ángel had lived apart for eighteen of their twenty years of marriage, and Maria was ready to move north, even though the expense of flying her entire family back to Mexico meant it was uncertain whether she would ever be able to return. I asked Ángel what they planned to do with their house. For the first few months the house would be looked after by his mother-in-law, who was already responsible for Maria's sister's home. This was complicated by the fact that she was also moving north within the year. Still, he had no intention of selling or renting the house. When I asked who would care for these homes after everyone moved to the United States, he sighed and said, "That's a good question Débora. What will become of these [empty] houses?"

Although Ángel and Maria did not have the means to return to Mexico in the near term, they also acknowledged that they did not have a pressing need to return. When Maria's mother left for the United States six months later, all of their extended family members would be living there. Nevertheless, for some Textitlanecos in circumstances similar to Maria and Ángel's, the idea of returning to Mexico "someday" is a recurring theme in their life stories. When pressed to consider when this might be possible, most discuss plans to return permanently in a few years. In Pennsylvania, my friend Sergio Carmona said, "My girls are little now. I want them to grow up in Mexico, to go to Mexican schools. If we wait too long, we'll never be able to go back." Seven years later,

Sergio and his family were still living in Pennsylvania in a new townhouse they purchased in 1999, and his daughters entered third and fifth grade in the fall of 2007.

Sergio's desire that his daughters grow up to be "Mexican," as opposed to "American," is a desire common to many families. Others are more pragmatic about their present options and know they cannot afford to live a middle-class life in their natal community. Among these families, their plans are to work in the United States until retirement age, then sell their homes and return to Mexico for good. Economically, this makes sense because United States Social Security and pension benefits stretch further in Mexico (in fact, a substantial number of Americans retire in Mexico for precisely this reason). Nevertheless, for this young working population, retirement is twenty-five to thirty-five years away, and making such a move is complicated in that their children most likely will be staying in the United States with jobs and families of their own. Many families will most likely return to Textitlán at some point for a vacation, and they reason that the house is paid for, so why not keep it for use at some undetermined time in the future? However, keeping a house for thirty years that might be used two or three times might seem shortsighted, especially when the proceeds from the sale of the house could be used to enhance their lives in the United States.

The Textitlanecos who elect to immigrate to the United States understand that from the moment they move north they are no longer able to afford their vision of an "ideal" life, which means earning a middle-class wage while living in their homes in Mexico. Their lives become a series of negotiations that they hope will provide more choices and economic opportunities, while at the same time not completely sacrificing their lives and identities as Mexicans. With these negotiations comes a constant tension between freedom and control, between having the impossible idealized life in Mexico and its associated autonomy versus the pragmatic control over their economic futures and the lives they can build in the United States. The home in this instance is not an economic investment but an emotional one. It is a means to keep their symbolic place in the community while they live elsewhere.

When doing fieldwork on the casa vacía during the summer of 2005, I met a woman who was caring for the house of an old friend who had moved to Pennsylvania two years before. Doña Celia was using her brother-in-law's house temporarily, although she had no immediate plans to move. When I asked her why her sister and brother-in-law had not sold their large house, which also included a small *tortarilla* (luncheonette) in the front, she said, "When we know our family members are moving north, we don't encourage them to sell their homes here. We know they may not be back for many years, but when they come back, we want them to have *their place* here to come home to."[12]

It is a common stereotype that Mexicans are people who live in the moment. Cinematic portrayals and joke cycles frequently play on this idea, emphasizing that Mexicans as a group are not likely to delay gratification. The casa vacía, however, is exemplar of the typical long-deferred fulfillments that are common with Mexicans who live in Kennett Square. Casas vacías are reified life experiences that have been reconstituted orally through family narrative but also structurally. They are emblematic of the desire to preserve permanent ties with their natal community despite the necessity to deter the immediate gratification of experiencing that community on a daily basis. The sacrifices and experiences through migration are transformed through memories of the lives they have left behind and are embodied in the homeplace into the hope that these connections will endure through their years of absence. This durability makes life in the United States possible, and as many Textitlanecos say, *vale la pena* (it's worth the effort). The casas vacías give meaning to years of sacrifice.

Regardless of whether or not it is realistic that they will go home to live, or their visits are brief reprieves, the care in maintaining and improving the empty Textitlán houses serves a purpose in the community and hearts of those who are attached to them. When I delved deeper into the idea of the casa vacía, I found that these houses are repositories of cultural memory. In fact, casas vacías function much like memorials where the home becomes a medium through which family members who stay behind are able to commune with the memories and shared experiences of those who have migrated. By becoming the custodial

caretaker of the casa vacía, a bridge is established between distant relations. They cannot interact directly with their family members in the United States, but caring for the home provides an opportunity to do unto the home as they would do to the family member. The home and its contents become "objects of memory" but not as a life review. The houses serve as place markers for absent families who are still considered members of their home communities. Houses "function most effectively as a symbol when [they are] simply not lived in. An empty house is a potent symbol of the past. The house is also a better symbol of the family which once lived there if another family has not taken up residence" (Williams 1991: 130). Casas vacías are not simply symbols of the past, however; they also are symbolic of memories yet to come, the longed-for return and reunion. In this sense, the objects in the home enable recollection and hope to become palpable, more real.

This symbolism is as significant for families living in the United States as it is for those in Mexico. Porteous argues that the home is the "one sure refuge for the individual who is compelled to venture beyond its confines on a regular basis" (1976: 386). Although one may be away for extended periods, it is rare for a person to have more than one true home at any given time. Instead, people who are forced to leave home for any number of reasons often develop a dual sense of emplacement, what I have referred to as multilocal belonging. Porteous (1976) echoes this idea, distinguishing between the "felt home," where loyalties and emotional belonging reside, and the "euphemistic home," which holds no particular emotional attachment but nevertheless is the place where the person must dwell (388). The relocation from the felt home to euphemistic home is often traumatic.

Some Textitlanecos who live in Pennsylvania are still marginalized in their new neighborhoods. Even as homeowners and long-standing residents, these families often acknowledge that their sense of belonging in the United States is tenuous. If they are not homeowners, their situation is complicated by the fact that they must compete for limited rental housing and ultimately substandard housing. Refusing to let go of the house in Mexico then softens the reality of their lives in Pennsylvania. If they feel out of place here, then they can at least hold onto the idea that they

have a rightful place elsewhere. The house allows Mexican families to hold onto dreams of returning home, of once again belonging to their natal communities. At the same time, the Mexican house maintains the position of the absent family in the community. They are not physically there to partake in social life, but their presence is not as easily forgotten because the house looms ever present, prompting their memory for those who care for the home and others who live nearby. Keeping the house intact also adds to the immediacy of the family's rightful place and keeps alive their membership in the community. This is evidenced in their self-identification, for although these Mexican families may live away for decades, they always refer to themselves as Textitlanecos in the United States and in Mexico.

The idea of leaving a house empty yet intact is one that is common in other parts of the world experiencing out-migration that is secondary to a depressed economy. In southern Appalachia, houses that were once occupied by families who have moved to other parts of the United States are often abandoned and not reinhabited by other families (Williams 1991). Similarly, in the Canadian province of Newfoundland, the countryside is dotted with the empty houses of Newfoundlanders who have migrated to Toronto and the United States in search of profitable employment. Folklorist Cory Thorne notes that among Newfoundlanders, "There is a constant desire to return to the island; the houses are kept for an undetermined future time when their return will be possible."[13] These examples echo the behavior patterns of Mexicans who have migrated or settled in the United States for employment. The exit from home in this instance is more akin to an exile than a voluntary movement from one place to another. Thus the attachment to the homeplace is understandable. It is a symbol of resistance to the economic imperative to move for viable employment and indicates the immigrants' true desire: to live in their home community.

In my examination of the casa vacía, I found that the family house in Mexico is not simply a dwelling or an economic investment. In fact, the intrinsic value of the house lies more in the broader community and the migrant families' attachments to that community, as evidenced by the fact that Mexican families maintain their homes regardless of the

cost. Don Julio, a former migrant and octogenarian, cares for his brothers' homes. As we sat talking on his patio one morning, he looked out across his street and pointed out three different vacant houses that are owned by families who now live in the United States. He said, "I go to the houses every evening to check everything. Sometimes my brother rents the house but never the entire house. He may rent the first floor, but he always keeps the second floor locked and his family's things (furniture, clothing, electronic equipment, photos) upstairs. The house has all services, electricity, telephone, water, cable [television]. It costs about 800 pesos a month (approximately $80 U.S.) to keep the services, but when he comes back, the house is ready for him. He doesn't have to ask one of his brothers, 'Can I stay with you?' He has his own home to come back to."[14]

Around the corner, Don Victoriano took a break from running his small textile factory. He owns and operates a large machine that knits delicate crochet fabrics that he then sews into sweaters that are sold in Mexico and the United States. As we sat outside his door, he pointed to four houses on his street that are currently empty. Like other Textitlanecos, he not only knows the history of the empty houses on his street, but he also knows who the homes' caretakers are and the frequency with which they visit the home, where the absent families live in the United States, and how often the families who own the homes return to Textitlán. In one case, Don Victoriano attempted to purchase a large, well-appointed house located across the street from his own. He recalled, "That family, they haven't been back in eleven years. I asked his [the owner's] sister if I could purchase the house, they haven't been here in so long . . . but she told me no, they wanted to keep the house."[15]

Don Victoriano's account of the homes was similar to Don Julio's, in that the houses are meticulously maintained by their caretakers, but he also added, "These houses are the migrants' real homes (*hogares*). They don't just keep them as they left them when they went *pa'Norte* (to the North). They return with new pictures of their families and hang them on the walls. They bring new things to decorate the homes and improve them, like televisions and stereos. Then they go back to the United States to work, but this is always their home."[16]

Improving the home for their respites in Textitlán, regardless of how brief, is common. Doña Elena, who had been the caretaker for her daughter Ofelia's home when I rented it in 1999–2000, at first minimized her daughter's family's attachment to their first home. "No," she said, "they [Ofelia's family] don't have much left in the house right now." Yet, in the next breath she recalled, "Ofelia built a new bathroom in the house—did you know that?—two years ago, when they were here for a visit." I found this statement puzzling, especially because Ofelia's house already had a large, functioning bathroom. When I asked why they built a bathroom, she replied, "Well, you know that the stairs to the second floor are very steep, and the bathroom is on the first floor. Ofelia didn't want the children walking up and down the stairs at night, so she and Mario built a new bathroom upstairs."[17] When I inquired further about the new bathroom, Ofelia's niece Adela explained that the bathroom construction was started several months before the family arrived on vacation, which lasted a month. Mario and Ofelia's behavior here is significant. Although they have a home in Pennsylvania, they thought nothing of investing several thousand dollars building a bathroom in their former home, even though they have only used it three times since they moved their family to Pennsylvania.

MULTILOCAL BELONGING

The casa vacía also constructs a distinct sense of belonging. Typically, the connection of people to places is conceptualized as solitary: one person feels a sense of belonging in one particular place. In contrast, Textitlanecos belong to multiple places, although their connections to each place can vary from person to person. For many of these settlers there are two homelands. The felt home of Textitlán may always be the emotional home for these settlers, but rarely can one survive anywhere without some place attachment. Living in the United States requires the production of multiple attachments to at least two places: one that is work and place oriented, one that is emotional and people oriented. This "polygamy of place" (Beck 2000) constructs a dialect of place that transcends

national borders and challenges the notion of the home country and host society as an either-or dichotomy for winning immigrants' affection and loyalty.

The sacrifice of living in the United States, of leaving family, friends and all that is familiar and comfortable with their homeland, is acceptable because it provides a means to an end: access to the middle class or at least a more affluent lifestyle and a future that is more economically secure for their families. Given the choice, however, most settlers in Kennett Square maintain that they would prefer to live in Mexico, but nevertheless do not want to give up the economic benefits of working in the United States. The displacement associated with settlement is destabilizing. As a means of mitigating this instability, immigrants reconstruct their lives in the United States through narratives as a temporary inconvenience that they believe will someday end. Keeping their homes in Mexico is tangible evidence that they will return.

The house also symbolizes economic and personal accomplishment to other Textitlanecos. Mexicans who have moved their families north must have the means to support them. Samuel Fernández told me that he made his first trip to Pennsylvania to save money to build his house. Starting with one room and then adding on until his family had a comfortable four-bedroom, two-bath home in El Bordo that was near the center of Textitlán, the Fernández home is a substantial life achievement. The bricks and cement correspond to his family's economic success and are testament to the fact that the years in the North paid off. Samuel's family now lives in another four-bedroom home that they purchased in Oxford, Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, he has no intention of selling his Mexican house, which his daughter Adela, living away while in dental school, occasionally uses on the weekends. Keeping the house is a luxury that Pedro can afford, which further demonstrates his economic success.

The connection that the Fernández family members have to their home was underscored in April of 2003 when Samuel and Lucia's oldest son, José (Joe), was killed in a car crash. His death was, understandably, a devastating loss. He was the first Fernández to die in the United States, and he had survived a near-fatal crash just three years before. Joe had returned to the United States in 2000 and worked for a while in Chicago, then returned to Kennett Square two years later. The other members of

his family became legal permanent residents and moved to the United States in 2002, but Joe had been not been as fortunate. Samuel had started the legalization procedures eight years earlier, but Joe had turned twenty-one before the family's papers were processed.

Joe had a rebellious streak; his sisters told me that he had settled down since he returned from Chicago. He was dating a nice young woman and was driving home from her house when his car swerved unexpectedly off the road and hit a building. It was a single-car crash not far from his family's home; there were no witnesses to the accident.

The morning after Joe died, his cousin Celia called to give me the sad news and to let me know that the family was planning funeral services for him in Pennsylvania. She also mentioned that there was some discussion about whether they should return his body to Mexico, as the cost to transport his body would be considerable.[18] Despite the cost, the family decided to return Joe's body to Textitlán. It was a difficult decision, because they all knew that in taking his body back, they would have fewer opportunities to visit his burial place, but in the end they concluded that this was what he would have wanted.

As is the custom, a family member in Mexico placed a black ribbon over the front door of the Fernández home in Textitlán as a sign of *luto*, or mourning. My family and I traveled to Pennsylvania for the services, but I was unable to attend his rite of Christian burial in Mexico. I returned to Textitlán approximately four months later. The black ribbon was still hanging, in tatters, above the door. Inside, the house was much the same as when the family left it the year before. Joe's childhood toys were still displayed in his room, just as they had been when he left three years earlier.

Visiting Joe's grave with his sister Adela that summer, I was struck by the inscription on his tomb:

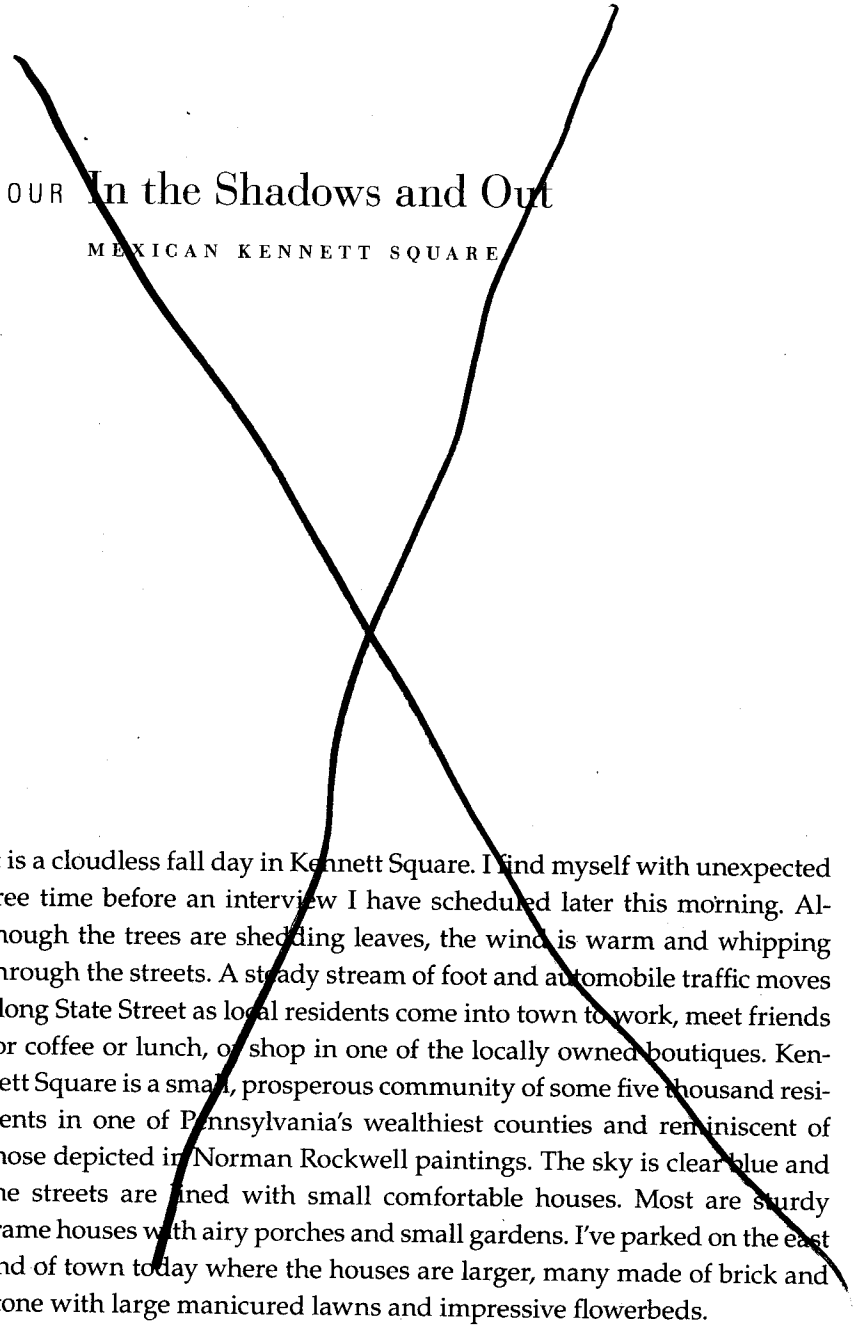
> This tomb preserves your body
> God preserves your soul
> and we preserve your memory.

The Fernández casa vacía, like others in the family's pueblo, serves an almost identical purpose: to preserve the memory of a family and life in a material form that is immovable and indestructible. Mexican families

who have settled in Pennsylvania in many ways have also passed from one realm to another. They are gone but also present in the narratives and memories that are elicited when their family and friends see their houses. With their passage remains the chance of return and reunification, a hope that is maintained within the intact homes that are left behind. In this regard, the casa vacía is probably a misnomer. These are not empty houses but homes full of memory and meaning.

FOUR In the Shadows and Out

MEXICAN KENNETT SQUARE



It is a cloudless fall day in Kennett Square. I find myself with unexpected free time before an interview I have scheduled later this morning. Although the trees are shedding leaves, the wind is warm and whipping through the streets. A steady stream of foot and automobile traffic moves along State Street as local residents come into town to work, meet friends for coffee or lunch, or shop in one of the locally owned boutiques. Kennett Square is a small, prosperous community of some five thousand residents in one of Pennsylvania's wealthiest counties and reminiscent of those depicted in Norman Rockwell paintings. The sky is clear blue and the streets are lined with small comfortable houses. Most are sturdy frame houses with airy porches and small gardens. I've parked on the east end of town today where the houses are larger, many made of brick and stone with large manicured lawns and impressive flowerbeds.