Living Liminality

A Study of Second Generation Immigrant Identity

by

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For Matheus.

A formidable opponent,

and a brilliant brother
On the seventh of June, I received an email which, admittedly, I only casually scanned:

…some collective feedback from the faculty in Anthropology who read your thesis proposal…

I find it difficult, if not impossible, to rouse much interest in the belated news and announcements from academia that tend to proliferate during the earliest days of summer. There are whole months during the academic year when emails never grace my inbox; yet somehow, once a vacation has begun, an hour seldom passes uninterrupted by the chimes of an incoming message, reminding me to check my credit status, to order textbooks, or, more recently, to make post-graduation plans. Though this particular email was of far greater import than the usual tedium, I still found myself struggling to focus my attention on anything but the beautiful weather and the polite fiction of free time. One sentence, however, refused my attempts at speed-reading:

…faculty suggested that bringing in your personal experience might be a point of departure for the ‘thickening’ of your exploration…the question of where the project originated, where it came from, seemed absent in your thesis proposal…

A question easily enough answered, I thought, and I began writing, almost immediately, about my personal stakes in matters concerning second generation immigrants because, after all, I am a second generation immigrant. And so the story of where my project “originated” began thusly:

I was born and have always been between languages, between cultures and between nations…
I often read my work aloud. My mother taught me that hearing one’s own writing exposes the most elusive of errors and stylistic blunders. Valuable advice, and a technique I employ religiously; although, I suspect that I enjoy the sound of my own voice more than I truly appreciate the benefits that this editing trick affords. And so I set about re-reading the genealogy of my thesis project aloud, pacing around the house. There was, of course, the occasional misspelling or convoluted sentence, but as I read further, I noticed an oversight of a different nature. A certain vacancy, a missing thought, announced itself deafeningly, and, in its absence, rendered my words somehow artificial, somehow insincere. Even that introductory phrase, “I was born,” seemed premature, as though I had begun in medias res. A telling silence enveloped the text. It took me quite some time to locate the source of this uncomfortable lacuna, which had everything to do with the very first word: I. In truth, I am not the beginning of this story, the account of where and with whom my project begins. Rather, it ought to begin:

He was born with one language, with one culture, with one nation…

“He” is my father, and to better articulate the “origins” of this ethnography, I ought to tell his story first. In many ways, I owe my own interest in transnational studies to him.

He was born with one language, one culture and one nation. Alvaro Eduardo de Castro e Lima, the child of a wealthy writer, grew up on the Ilha de São Luis, which floats quietly in a bay on the northeastern coast of Brazil just south of the Amazon Delta, close enough that its warm tides are brown and frothy with silt. In his childhood, Alvaro bore witness to the cacophonous contretemps of rebellion and self-righteous renewal, of voices competing for their claim to Brazil and to its limits. He was born there, in the thick of that great debate, caught between the insidious whispers of a military government inclined to forget its tryst with Latin America – with the Indians and Communists that had diluted the blood of good European families – and the chanting chorus of comrades-rie that had drifted down from Cuba, to remind young boys like my father, the little men of the Left, of the love that dances always in the fires of revolution. Thus, my father found himself in a cross-eyed country, where some looked North to remember, and others looked East to forget. After twenty years, my father, now a grown man, now an expert
hider of books, a sly reader of condemned texts, decided that the moment was ripe to quit the confusion. Over steaming cafézinhos, a friend spoke to my father of another country, of a people that had thrown off the yoke of oppression, and of a chance to answer the call from Cuba: a place where the little men of the Left could step out of the shadows. He made for Mozambique.

I should take a moment to pause and inform the reader that I have a tendency to glorify my father’s story, which is more a myth to me than a history. I have heard it recounted so many times, and each rendition is slightly different than the last; but, no matter the contradictions that arise between the various accounts, I always imagine a narrative of mythical proportions, and I can only retell it as such…

My father’s first sojourn in a foreign nation he spent roaming the dusty streets of Maputo, sharing hotel bars with Korean and Vietnamese immigrants, moving from one temporary asylum to another. My father joined the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique\(^1\) within a year of his arrival in ‘79, and lent his hands to the creation of a country, building from dust and rubble that which could not grow in the lush tropics of his own land. Many things bloomed in Mozambique. He left the continent with more than memories. A woman, my mother, the gringa, had also followed the reverberations of revolution to Maputo, all the way from Montreal, with camera equipment slung across her back, and suitcases packed full with fieldwork notebooks. In a dimly lit apartment, amongst newfound friends and a fair few strangers, the young anthropologist danced, for a moment, with a handsome, bearded brasileiro from São Luis and married him a year later. The albums of Polaroid photographs that line the bookcase in my father’s study will attest to the period of unbridled happiness which followed their wedding. They stayed in Mozambique for eight more years. But when all of my mother’s notebooks had been filled and the tolling of dissertation deadlines called her back to her snowy academia, together they returned – albeit begrudgingly - to the frigid metropolis that she had, for a time, forgotten. Her studies would continue for many years, in several cities, and all the while, my father read his books. But such an indomitable love of text could not be easily satisfied by leisurely reading, so when the couple arrived in Boston, their taste for travel swiftly fading, he began a more rigorous regimen of scholarly pursuit. I was born the

\(^1\) The Liberation Front of Mozambique
following year. In late July, as my mother slept quietly in hospital linens, my father held his newborn child in one hand, and a book in the other.

This is, perhaps, where the myth and my own life converge. Much that follows describes the order of things as they are today, while the above mentioned tale is more my own attempt to make sense of a past that is foreign to me, to cobble together episodes of my father’s life into a comprehensible story, one with which I feel entangled. How my father’s adventures really came to pass, is of little concern to me. I abandoned the enterprise of discerning the “truth” many years ago. I would rather remain in blissful wonderment of this somewhat folkloric saga of events than investigate them as a “history.” Indeed, they are signs deliberately mistaken for wonders. However, I can say with some degree of certainty, that the subsequent interlude of my father’s story is not so beholden to my imagination; rather, this account has been crafted from compiled mental notes and, arguably, years of participant observation.

Much has changed since my father left his little island. Now he speaks two languages, finds himself embedded in two cultures, and lives between two nations. Many miles north of São Luis, my father found a new home, where the seawater is icy and the tides slap against concrete piers; but, like many immigrants today, he never lost touch with that tiny isle, nor with his nation, Brazil. He returns frequently to his father’s home on São Luis, where most of his brothers and sisters still live, not just to visit family, but to participate in political dialogues and cultural events; and, although he splits his time between two countries, his interest in matters concerning his homeland has not diminished in the least since his departure. In fact, my grandmother often jests that he is more Brazilian now than he was when he left. He also sends home money, gifts and, more importantly, his children, my brother and me; and, in his absence, we carry beijos² from Boston to São Luis and abraços³ back again. He is a transnational Brazilian immigrant who came to United States without ever really leaving Brazil. He now lives, loves, and works “here and there.”

He is also a scholar. Indeed, my father loves to read. As such, he took an immediate interest in the study of his own condition of being “between” nations and was

² kisses
³ hugs
thus preoccupied, for many years, with “transnationalism,” just as it became the focus of intense interdisciplinary focus and scholarly debate. As departments devoted to the study of transnationalism began to emerge across the United States and Europe, my father eagerly immersed himself in the literature, research, and theoretical exploration engendered by this blooming international interest. He calls the moment of his encounter with transnational scholarship his awakening, when the hidden colors of immigrant life, so often relegated to the ghettos of the national consciousness, came into the sharpest focus. Phone cards fluttering in bodega windows chattered with the sounds of lives preserved, not lost, in translation and transit. The words that had for decades victimized his migrant cohort, called them a homeless generation, a generation wandering aimlessly the peripheries of a foreign land, now these words only served to poorly obscure the reality that everything “here” was from “there” already, that everything “there” was “here” to stay. The world no longer resembled the words. The disjuncture fomented insurrection and the new word – transnationalism – burst onto the scene. My father was proud, I think, to contribute to this new revolution, for the new word captured his sense of being “in between.”

I admire my father greatly. As a result, and I often read what he reads, perhaps out of the genuine agreement of our intellectual tastes, or perhaps out of perpetual boyish admiration. I suspect the latter is more likely the case. As such, I took up the recreational study of transnationalism, as my father had; but whereas he had found great catharsis in this reading, oddly I did not. And thus, he – not I – planted the seed of this ethnography many years ago, for had I not been so determined to emulate his bibliophilia, I would not have fallen upon the word that captured his own imagination – transnationalism – nor would I have discovered how little of my own experience it could effectively articulate. I was further removed from my father’s narrative of immigration than I had originally imagined. His history, which had served as a tenuous bridge between us, between our generations, now seemed a somewhat precarious crossing, more and more a fiction. Indeed, his adventures, which I have recounted here, had not always appeared so clearly folkloric to me. For most of my youth they were taken as truths, not fables. Indeed, I was inclined to preserve, in my naïveté, the illusion of generational continuity.
However, in this moment, I could no longer bring my father’s immigrant experience to bear on my own. The words did not describe my world. Perhaps by virtue of the increasingly perceptive and sensitive calibration of adulthood, I began to feel a great gulf opening between my father’s experience and my own, a gulf that, despite my adolescent assumption that his truths were my truths, had always divided us. This single word – transnationalism – seen honestly through more mature eyes, signified a schism in our lives, which had for so long seemed inextricably entangled, but now ran parallel. I will not soon forget this moment of rupture: my father’s story so clearly revealed as a myth that I – not he – had strung together. Perhaps my recognition of this disjuncture between my father’s narrative and the trajectory of my own life amounts to a realization that I am undeniably of the second generation and that this second generation, my generation, is not such a neat replica of the first. How could we be? If I was not born in Brazil, how can I claim it as my own? How can I call that place home? Yet, if I was never uprooted, by choice or by coercion, why do I feel at times estranged in my own nation of birth and residence, the United States? And why, if the burden of these inquiries is simply the product of a nervous mind, if I am the architect of my own anxieties, why am I received like a stranger in my father’s country, even when speaking my father’s tongue?

I cannot ignore these questions. The pleasant continuity I had felt with his narrative of immigration is broken, and I must admit that our lives are not so cohesive, his and mine, they do not cling to each other as I had once imagined, nor will they ever, as I had hoped. The myth is just that: a myth. Thus I find myself, at the precipice of adulthood, during my final year of university, wondering if I can any longer feign identification with my father’s transnational experiences. Like him, I am consumed with the term transnationalism, not because it so effectively describes the circumstances of my upbringing or because it resonates with my particular multi-cultural experience, but because it does not. Despite years of travel to and from Brazil, despite my respectably fluent Portuguese, and despite my dual citizenship, I cannot claim to be living “here” and “there.” At least, not in same manner as my father. The “origin” of this ethnography is not, therefore, my interest in transnationalism; but rather, the aporia it has induced.
Introduction

Ethnography in Progress

The purpose of my ethnographic research is neither to diagnose one particular socio-cultural experience among all second generation immigrants nor to decry the concepts “transnationalism” and “transnationality” in favor of a new terminology that can be universally applied to immigrants of both generations. My purpose is not, in other words, to collapse real multiplicity into a single theory of second generation transnationalism. Rather, I employ the ethnographic method as an exploratory tool, in hopes of better understanding to what extent transnationalism and transnationality—insofar as these terms indicate particular forms of trans-border social engagement and subjectivity—are subject to generational transformation that may produce a vast array of identities and modes of identification some (but not all) of which may be “transnational.”

Points of Departure: Goals and Contributions

In reference to ethnic identity among immigrants, sociologists such as Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut have argued that “fathers, sons and grandsons may differ among themselves not only in the degree but also in the nature of their identification with ethnicity.”⁴ Like Portes and Rumbaut, I intend to explore the ways the second generation immigrant experience adheres to or resists inscription within the current discourse of first generation transnationalism. Beginning with an understanding that first and second generation immigrants may not identify themselves as “transnational” along a unidimensional continuum, this ethnographic exploration places importance on how cultural and national identity, and thus “transnationality,” may take on new meanings and expressions for second generation immigrants. As Peggy Levitt suggests in her brief study of second generation Dominicans living in the greater Boston area, there is little agreement amongst social scientists as to what form transnational practices and identity will take in the second generation: some skeptics predict that there will be no significant

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change in the nature of second generation immigrants’ participation in the transnational social fields of their parents nor in their identification with the cultures of distant first generation homelands; others assert that the second generation will sustain minimal contact with their ancestral homeland and are likely to be “ethnic” but not necessarily transnational. These predictions notwithstanding, I agree with Levitt, who emphasizes that it may be “too early to sound the death knell”\(^5\) for transnationality in the second generation, particularly because there is a distinct lack of *ethnographic research* that is attuned to the “many smaller, less frequent transnational practices that the children of immigrants engage in”\(^6\) as well as the tensions and anxieties associated with the absence or degradation of transnational ties amongst the American born children of immigrants. As Levitt intimates, transnational studies finds itself at a critical moment.

Indeed, the “second generation,” argue Portes and Rumbaut, is the “decisive turning point for change in ethnic and national self-identities.”\(^7\) This notion of a “turning point” between generations thus serves as the conceptual foundation for this project. Or rather, “turning points,” for the ethnographic content of this project focuses on five second generation Brazilian immigrants between the ages of seventeen and twenty two, living in the Greater New England area\(^8\), myself included. As a result of the relative youth of Brazilian outmigration to the United States, the second generation Brazilian immigrants whose stories fill the pages of this ethnography find themselves at critical moments of rupture. All five – Amanda, Anselmo, Beatrice, Tiabe\(^9\) and I – are coming of age, exploring novel cultural topography and encountering new friendships, angst and aspirations. Together, we explore the texture of our transnational identities as they are transformed in this moment. In our dialogue, however, we orient ourselves also toward our futures, playfully pondering possibilities, succumbing at times to the intrigue of the uncertain. Yet, this speculative forward glance is not without anxiety and doubt, for we


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Portes & Rumbaut, Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation, pg. 150.

\(^8\) Given my ethnographic research methodology, I felt strongly that by attempting to extend interviews to a wider immigrant community I would not only risk a totalizing perspective on second generation cultural belonging but also sacrifice the ethnographic scope of the project.

\(^9\) At the request of my informants, I have changed their names in the text of my ethnography.
cannot hitherto discern how our shifting lifeworlds might provoke further reflection and subjective metamorphoses. Nor can we hope to prophesy the cascade of changes that may outlast the pages of this ethnography, that will continue to unfold once it is “written.” Because I am exploring the fine grain of lives in progress, I am compelled to present the reader with an ethnography in similar form.

Thus, this project can only serve as a provisional analysis of second generation transnationalism, for the imminent metamorphoses that these young men and women face may, in fact, come to further shape their cultural and national identities. As Beatrice approaches the conclusion of her college career, she wrestles with the uncertainty of post-graduate life and its implications for her sustained contact with family in Minas Gerais. How, she wonders, will her connection with the culture and language of her parents change as a result of her own entrance into adult life? Not only do these inquiries help articulate the texture of Beatrice’s transnational engagement as a second generation immigrant, but they also testify to the critical moment of transformation wherein they arise. Similarly, Anselmo, another college senior, finds himself considering whether his already waning affinity for his Brazilian heritage and history can withstand the swift, powerful current of professional life. A four year liberal arts education has already profoundly influenced the depth of his identification with his mother’s homeland culture and thus, as graduation approaches and the reality of his needing to achieve fiscal and personal autonomy crystallizes, Anselmo confronts an important crossroads. Tiabe, on the other hand, enters college contemplating the enticing possibilities of a “fresh start,” of self-recreation and personal redefinition and what these transformations might mean for his composite cultural identity and multinational solidarities. Born of Brazilian and German parents and accustomed to living and learning abroad, Tiabe perceives university life as an opportunity to extend the boundaries of his socio-cultural horizons and to share his own multi-local experiences with his cohort. Tiabe welcomes change. Amanda, faced with comparable circumstances, begins her first year of university education with strikingly different apprehensions, struggling to maintain her sense of Brazilian identity in the absence of the large Brazilian immigrant community in which she has spent most

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10 It is important to note that issues of “race” are not of primary focus in this ethnography. Because all my informants are relatively light skinned, from Brazilian families of European descent, none expressed any significant experience with prejudice based specifically on “race” or skin color.
of her life. Despite her experience with international travel and her familiarity with the particular anxieties of immigrant life, the uncertainty of distance – distance from her families in both Boston and Governador Valadares, distance from her church, the Paroquia Santo Antiono, and distance from her Brazilian friends at home and abroad – emerges as a perpetual source of discomfort as well as an impetus for self-exploration.

These second generation immigrants speak through the turmoil, the anxiety and the jubilation of transformation. Their voices not only illuminate the texture of moments past but also the fine-grain of this moment, a moment of flux, of slippage, of ambiguity. A moment that is, above all, a moment and therefore ephemeral. And yet, potentially formative. What proves most difficult about writing from such moments, what makes them so puzzling to the ethnographer, is whether they are insignificant time passing, moments to be forgotten; or decisive moments, that will to some degree shape the next flow of time. As an ethnographer, I am constantly aware of this tension, the pressures of time on my work; nevertheless, the goal of this ethnography is not to exhaust its subject matter nor to present the reader with a comprehensive account of transnationalism amongst second generation immigrants. It aims to interpretively, rather than completely, convey a moment. A moment of rupture. A moment of anxiety. A moment of hope. A cross-section of dynamically changing and transforming lives. As such, this project is ethnography in progress. The pages set before you are not only a testament to ethnographic work accomplished but to ethnographic work to come. If the reader will continue to tolerate my inclination to digression, I assert that the provisional nature of this project is perhaps best articulated by the playfully capricious modern novel Don Quixote, one of my father’s favorite literary works and one which I subsequently adopted, at first as a matter of habit and later as a matter of taste. Miguel de Cervantes assumes a similarly enthusiastic attitude towards his mercurial text and its characters as I do towards the uncertain terms of my own ethnographic work and the young Brazilians with whom I have collaborated. A particularly intriguing encounter between Cervantes’ mad protagonist, the self proclaimed knight errant, and the galley slave named Ginés de Pasamonte captures wonderfully the uncertainty of writing from “moments.” As is the case with many supporting and secondary characters in the novel, Ginés is an author,
hard at work composing an autobiography, having “written [his] life with [his] fingers.”

However, when our curious knight asks Ginés whether his book, aptly named *The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte*, is yet finished, the slave replies rhetorically “How can it be finished, if my life isn’t?” Like Ginés, I wish to emphasize the provisionality of my work lest the reader be compelled to ask: *Is it finished?* How could it be, if the lives of Beatrice, Anselmo, Tiabe and Amanda are not?

Moreover, the ethnographic enterprise is always and necessarily unfinished. Every ethnographer finds himself or herself, at some point, inundated with notes, saturated with field work and tormented by looming deadlines. There comes a time, therefore, when the ethnographer must write. This act of writing, however, should not ignore its own deficiencies nor feign knowledge where knowledge is incomplete. Rather, writing must serve as a coming to terms with absence; the absence of sufficient data, the absence of sufficient time and the absence, ultimately, of tidy conclusions. Not unlike Ginés de Pasamonte, our shackled philosopher, ethnography must acknowledge lack, it must concede that it too has unfinished business. Although many social scientists will vehemently disagree, I would like to suggest that this is not so grave a concession, for it doubles as an affirmation that ethnographic work might serve to engender dialogue and further research. Indeed, that is the paramount aspiration of this project: to incite discourse. As the critical lens of transnational studies shifts, in this moment of flux, to include the second generation as a unique demographic and to consider their emergent transnational identities, I should only hope that this ethnography serves as a point of departure, a platform from which to hop, skip, jump to others. Hence, I implore the reader to take notice of the ambiguities that arise within this text, to scrutinize its inconstancies and acknowledge moments when relevant ethnographic data does not exist. Perhaps the lacuna of my work will provoke fresh exploration.

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12 Ibid.
Whether considered as an emergent mode of cultural reproduction, as trans-border social form, or as a type of complex consciousness, transnationalism clearly lends itself to a much broader discourse within the fields of anthropology and sociology wherein “associations of place and culture…are taken as problems for [social science] research rather than the given ground that one takes as a point of departure.”¹³ As Gupta and Ferguson emphasize in their book *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, despite the recent move away from structuralism, contemporary Western notions of “culture” continue to stress “the shared, the agreed upon, the orderly” and thus the notion of “culture as order” have remained relatively intact. It is this discourse that seeks to *upset* disciplinary moors, that is, a discourse that focuses on how “dominant cultural forms may be picked up and used – and significantly transformed – in the midst of power relations that link localities to a wider world,”¹⁴ a discourse that recognizes what is to be gained from “cross-fertilizations at the interstices between disciplines,”¹⁵ to which I hope this ethnography will contribute. In contrast to anthropological work that clings to the “shared, agreed upon, orderly” notion of culture that Gupta and Ferguson consider stagnant, my project acknowledges its own messiness and embraces the complexities and fragmentation that this moment of great transformation – within the social sciences, within transnational studies, within the lives of my informants, and within my own life – heralds. Nevertheless, though Gupta and Ferguson’s intentions - to call into question this notion of “culture as order” – are admirable and timely, they tend to cast these traditional social science perspectives in an *overwhelming* negative light, likening these visions of culture as akin to “a Hobbesian Leviathan” standing “against the ever present threat of chaos and anomie.”¹⁶ Undeniable complexities notwithstanding, can there be no agreed upon in culture? Can cultures still serve to organize and orient people and communities in an era of globalization and cultural fluidity? These are questions which I return to continually in my work, for I am less willing than Gupta and

¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
Ferguson to concede the powerful role of shared cultural and national traditions and histories as guiding forces in the lives of individuals, even those who live “here and there.” Hence, I hope to challenge both traditional and emergent assumptions with respect to “culture” within the discipline of anthropology. In the same fashion, this ethnography turns the critical-creative lens of transnational studies back on transnational studies. Indeed, my ethnographic study of transnationalism and transnationality amongst second generation immigrants aims to problematize existing notions of transnationality - which already reimagine traditional social science’s understanding of the intersection between place, culture and identity – by asking whether they effectively apply to a group of individuals who may experience multiple languages, geographies, and cultural topographies in novel ways. Insofar as “transnationality” too has become an established category within the social sciences, evinced by the many theoretical “takes” on to the subject that have come to structure a vast inter-disciplinary discourse, this project aims to critically consider its limits.

Yet, if such a project is to be undertaken – one that hopes to explore not only the diversity of forms and degree of intensity that transnational practice and identity assume amongst second generation immigrants but also the boundaries of transnational scholarship itself –why do so ethnographically? Why ethnography and, more importantly, why ethnography now? When digital technology and established cyber-social networks make surveys and polls so easily administrable, why confine the scope of research to a select few individuals? Indeed, when the goals of such a project are deemed exploratory, why not widen the lens of research, why not forego the tedium of interviews and participant observation and instead extend its core inquiry – To what extent can some, perhaps even all, second generation immigrants be considered transnational? – to a field of hundreds, perhaps even more? The problem with such a methodological approach is, perhaps, the phenomenon in question itself: transnationalism. Insofar as this term refers to the “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement,” surveys and polls, though they provide for broad analysis of such social phenomena at particular moment in time,

fail to effectively capture its diachronic unfolding and transformation. That transnationalism may indicate *practice* and *activity* - the building of trans-border social fields and *development* of subjectivities and identities embedded in these networks – requires that the methods employed for its study be attentive to change, reorientation and degradation not only at the level of large social groups, but at the level of the “lived and fluid experiences of individuals.” Thus, I concur with Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller’s assertion that ethnography proves to be a particularly suited, if not the best suited, methodology for studying issues of transnationalism. Ethnographic work maintains a keen focus on the intersection of cultural practice and place, the harmony or dissonance between what Pierre Bourdieu call *habitus* – that is, a social group’s particular set of dispositions and expectations engendered by everyday life and the that groups’ location or *locations* – and calls attention to how these circumstances are subject to change. This attentiveness to the importance of diachrony with respect to transnational micropractices and modes of identification is all the more valuable given the moment of flux that informs the content of this particular ethnography: that all its ethnographic subjects find themselves at the precipice of significant life changes necessitates a research methodology prepared to contend with ongoing, perhaps at times confusing, transformation.

Thus, the methodological framework of this project is primarily ethnographic: over a period of ten months I conducted a series of ongoing interviews with the four aforementioned second generation Brazilian immigrants living or attending universities in the Greater New England area. These interviews, however, cannot be strictly labeled as such, for the formality of my dialogue with these young men and women quickly dissolved. What had begun as a sequence of procedural discussions, structured by a questionnaire and recorded using digital audio equipment, soon expanded into territories beyond the scope of my original inquiries and indeed my personal expectations for this research. We – my informants and I - developed vibrant and multi-dimensional relationships despite the format of first encounters. Frequently our meetings became

\[18\] Ibid.

impromptu rendezvous, as I often received phone calls or text messages (our preferred mode of communication) from my correspondents asking me informally to an afternoon coffee or a late lunch, invitations which I almost always obliged, for these candid encounters repeatedly provoked our most lively and textured conversations. In these spontaneous ethnographic moments, I rarely had my recording equipment readily available and typically refrained from producing my field notebook, lest my incessant scribbling interrupt our dialogue. Instead, I waited until our conversations had ended and my informants had departed from the location of our rendezvous to record what I could recall from our discussions, paying specific attention to recurring themes and dilemmas rather than on discrete sound-bytes. These notes were never taken more than fifteen minutes after an interview. As a result, some of the ethnographic data presented in the following chapters are reproduced from memory – events and encounters are *recollected* not transcribed – and should thus be treated by the reader with a *reasonable* degree of skepticism. Sections that tap my own memory of specific encounters or events are made explicit to the reader using footnotes labeled “Personal Recollection.”

In all other cases, the reader may assume that my ethnographic data were either recorded using digital recording equipment or documented in my field notebook. All direct quotations from any of my interlocutors appear in “quotations” as they would in a piece of literature and are labeled in my footnotes as “Personal Communications.” In the final section of this text, the reader will also find several photographs, namely of locations and objects that proved personally significant with respect to the ethnographic process. I have chosen to incorporate this supplemental material not only to offer the reader a more textured impression of my fieldwork, but also to honor the goals of this project as an exploration of the possibilities of creative and novel forms of social science work. To confine the ethnographic moment to text, I argue, is to risk limiting the potential of the ethnographic enterprise entirely and to ignore what anthropologist Michael Taussig’s aptly calls the “imaginative logic of discovery,” the active reconciliation of “material observation and reverie”\(^{20}\) that unfolds in notebooks, sketches, and diagrams. Moreover, to discredit the affective potency and critical potential

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of these oft forgotten elements of fieldwork would be to abandon the reigning interdisciplinary, perhaps even a-disciplinary, ambitions of this ethnography. To omit alternative forms of “text” on account of methodological orthodoxy would ultimately produce lackluster tracings of ethnography already written. To attempt, in other words, to approximate what an ethnography ought to be, is to limit its potential, to prematurely announce the boundaries of its critical project. There is no greater injustice done to a piece of writing than this, a hasty eulogy.

At this juncture, I must disclose my intention to depart from the traditional ethnographic method and the paradigm of an earlier anthropology in which a researcher travels great distances to an alien community, studies, observes, and participates in its culture carefully and methodically, draws on native informants, produces an orderly representation of an orderly society, “writes” the grammar and syntax of a culture and returns home. Though I recognize that this model persists and has its benefits, it is not the enterprise to which I hope to contribute. Several factors have influenced my desire to ally myself with a different sort of anthropology. Firstly, I am a second generation immigrant studying second generation immigrants, and thus I cannot claim to be an “outsider.” Although my informants’ experiences as American-born Brazilians may be radically different from my own, I am by no means approaching this research dispassionately: in this case, the scope of ethnographic inquiry includes myself as researcher. As such, the reader will find my own reflections scattered throughout this ethnography, not as philanthropic attempts to balance the ethnographic scale through reflexivity, but as acknowledgments of the impossibility of writing such an analysis without its being infused with my own experience of transnationality. Secondly, my work diverges from traditional ethnography because my intention is not to produce an orderly, comprehensive representation of the transnational experiences of second generation immigrants, namely because, as I have already suggested, my object of study is disorderly and uncertain. Writing from a moment precludes me from making definitive claims about any absolute typology or range of typologies that characterize transnationalism amongst second generation immigrants. The “grammar and syntax” of their experiences are most likely disorganized and related only tangentially, so the anthropological tradition of “returning” from the field with a structurally complete account of a culture is not a reasonable
ambition. Moreover, while I have already suggested that the inherent provisionality of my research stems from the “unfinished” lives of my informants, its contingency also arises from the sheer multiplicity of possible objects of study. Because I am studying second generation immigrants whose lives have not, to my knowledge, overlapped, there is no one society or community to be studied. Thus there can be no singular, all-inclusive account of their experience as there may be and most likely are many other, diverse manifestations of transnationalism amongst second generation immigrants. This study aims at exploring a few and in so doing providing the catalyst for further research. I am not suggesting that this project shies from critical and interpretive analysis; on the contrary, I approach my data rigorously, using established and tested ethnographic methods as well as past ethnographic research, and I must therefore acknowledge my indebtedness to the discipline. However, I do so having accepted that the product of this work will not be an orderly representation. Finally, I depart from the conventional anthropological enterprise insofar as I make use of research, theory, and knowledge that does not traditionally fall under that disciplinary heading. This project is (indeed it has always been) connected to diverse modes of coding, to overlapping, and at times, incongruous ideas and experiences. As my own academic training has been multidisciplinary, at once enriched and complicated by different regimes of signs,21 I will engage with methods of interpretation and elements of theory that have migrated from other regions of scholarship. Having been immersed in an academic program that critically explores Western philosophy and literature, I deploy in my writing references to canonical texts that help articulate the philosophical implications of my ethnographic work. I also make frequent use of metaphor, as it helps me come to terms with my fieldwork. As such, one finds within this text many concurrent critical and creative approaches to similar questions, derived from ethnographic methodology as well as from philosophical concepts, often times embedded in Western literature. This text is, in a sense, shot through with multiple academic experiences, as though written by many authors, and thus it does not approach its subject matter from and single “clean” epistemological touchstone.

It would seem that our friend Ginés de Pasamonte serves as an excellent model for understanding the unorthodox nature of this project and my relationship to it. First, he is both author and subject of his book, as I am of this ethnography. Like Ginés, who despite his imagined authorial exteriority finds himself intimately bound up in the narrative he writes, I too am implicated personally in this subject matter, and thus I find myself unusually mixed up in my methodological process. Second, granted that his life continues to unfold, Ginés’ work is necessarily unfinished, as mine will ultimately prove to be. Thirdly, Ginés’ appearance in my own writing thus far provides a perfect example of the inter-disciplinary borrowing and crosspollination that I employ throughout this text, using philosophical and literary works like Cervantes’ to enrich and elucidate my own. Finally, my own personal experiences appear as interpolated anecdotes dispersed throughout the chapters of this ethnography, just as Cervantes interposes various secondary characters and their stories at critical moments in his central narrative arc. These sections appear in *italics*. Moreover, the recurrence of Cervantes’ writing within my ethnography acknowledges my personal stake in matters of transnationalism and the family history that undergirds my academic curiosity, as both my father and his father are and were particularly fond of the novel, a fondness I seem to have inherited as well. Perhaps the crux of the matter is captured by Cervantes depiction of Ginés as cross-eyed, for “one of his eyes [turns] inward toward the other,”22 suggesting that somehow he experiences conflicting visions or suffers from double vision. In a sense, I too am cross-eyed, for I see my work though many lenses, both academic and personal. Thus, I can only offer a sort of esotropical or diplopic reading of my field work data. My position with respect to this project implies the intersection of multiple perspectives within a single individual and thus within a single text, if it can be considered a single text at all. My writing is a testament to multiplicity rather than unity, in more ways than one.

**Navigating Disjuncture: On Methodological and Ethical Difficulties**

Several dilemmas arise, both ethical and methodological, from my own personal implication in an ongoing academic dialogue regarding matters of transnationalism and

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22 Cervantes. Don Quijote: A New Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism. pg. 131.
from my subjective position as a second generation Brazilian immigrant, a member of the community I hope to study. Certainly the most evident of these is my inability to assert complete exteriority to my subject matter and thus that my work is neutral, as more traditional anthropology claims to be. It must be noted that my work should not be classified as “native” anthropology: insofar as I am studying individual transnational lives embedded to differing degrees in oftentimes separate transnational communities, the “field” is relatively unfamiliar to me. Nevertheless, I share many important experiences with my informants which include, but are not limited to, growing up in a multi-lingual household, traveling frequently to Brazil, and holding multiple passports. In this sense, I am an “insider” but not a “native”: a more or less active agent in a larger Brazilian diaspora but not a member of the individual transnational communities with which my informants may engage. To the extent that I am an “insider,” I recognize that the following account of transnationalism and transnationality amongst second generation immigrants will bear some mark of my own personal role in its development, as I will be sifting through my own experiences in my analysis. However, given that the ethnographic data collected from my research indicates that there are and will be many different second generation experiences of transnationalism and transnationality, the ethical quandary that might arise from my own desire to make everything “fit,” to find and exaggerate the common ground between my own experience and my informants’, is more or less resolved. To acknowledge that this ethnography is not looking for unity but rather rigorously studying multiplicity is to concede already that my own experience of transnationalism as a second generation immigrant is not in any way paradigmatic. It does not, in other words, serve to substantiate any single, totalizing theory; instead, it serves to supplement my investigation of an assortment of transnational experiences, some of which bear resemblance to my own, but most which do not. Of course, there are moments, particularly in the final chapters of this ethnography, when I consider important similarities amongst these experiences and explore their limits; however, these theoretical exercises should not be confused for systematization. Food for thought should not be confused for force feeding. Nevertheless, my departure from the goals of a traditional anthropological enterprise do signify a simultaneous departure from many traditional concerns about other ethical implications of ethnographic work. The politics of
representation in the case of my own ethnography are already more or less tangled and in order to more fully include my own life in the scope of my research I have indeed distanced myself from a longstanding institutional preoccupations with impartial research. I feel that the omission of my experience as an “insider” in such a project would prove dishonest to its readership and ultimately detract from its efficacy as critical study. I believe my self-examination adds a valuable element to this text. My answer, therefore, to this dilemma of “personal stakes” is to make them as explicit as possible.

With regards to methodological issues, perhaps the most complex obstacle that I have experienced – and continue to experience - in my research is the marked discrepancy between the set of discursive terms used in academia to tackle the intricate concept of transnationalism and the lexicon of my informants, who speak of their experiences as second generation immigrants using a language that does not usually conform to the established academic discourse of transnational studies. Yet, the task I have set before myself requires that I bridge these incongruities, that I reconcile – or at least attempt to reconcile - different manners of describing what may be similar phenomena. That is to say, the goal of my research is to explore the extent to which the term transnational, central to a field of study that encompasses an array of disciplines, adequately conveys the experience of second generation immigrants living in the United States despite the fact that many, if not all, of the second generation immigrants with whom I have spoken are not familiar with this term nor with its implications in a broader anthropological discourse. What might appear initially to be simple idiomatic dissonance becomes a legitimate puzzle when considering the appropriate methodology – that is the proper research design – for bridging what is often a vast gap between experiential as opposed to academic knowledge. My ethnographic field work, specifically interviews, are brimming with interesting, often profound, “data” – most often in the form of personal stories and histories, the fine-grain of lived experiences – but “data” that may not make explicit reference to transnationalism or transnationality at all. However, I assert that absence of these terms from our dialogue does not preclude their usefulness in understanding the practices and lifestyles of my informants. A degree of translation is required.
Of course, at many moments I find myself apprehensive, as many ethnographers are, concerned that my position of power as a researcher and my familiarity with terms such as “transnationalism” or “diaspora” might dissolve the honesty of our conversation. My ambition as an anthropologist is neither to impose a hypothesis upon their lives nor to catalogue these people within a great theoretical structure. Nor is it to convince my interlocutors that they are transnationals or partake in transnational practices despite their relative inexperience with this term and its manifold meanings. Indeed, for many of the second generation Brazilians with whom I have spoken thus far, the word transnationalism is a meaningless jumble of letters. As such, I have chosen to frame our conversations not as explicit investigations of their transnational experience, steering our dialogue into conceptual territory that may be unfamiliar and possibly shunting their stories into a discursive format the “fits” the theoretical foundations of my project, but rather as a cooperative storytelling, one that avoids the take-over of exclusive disciplinary discourse. Instead of introducing complicated terminology in service of extracting transnational subject matter from our dialogue, I focus my attention on providing an environment for my interlocutors in which they feel comfortable disclosing these stories, undifferentiated anecdotes without the conceptually loaded designation “transnational experiences.” I attempt, in other words, to avoid explicitly soliciting discussion of transnationalism or transnationality in hopes of precluding these ideas terms from becoming a scaffold to which our conversations cling. Rather, I approach these concepts indirectly, by concentrating primarily on broader, more inclusive subject matter – i.e. my interlocutors’ perceived relationships to the “homeland” of their parents, their individual sense of “belonging” in the United States and Brazil respectively, and the extent to which they feel obligated or even want to maintain actively engaged in social networks that transcend national boundaries. My formal inquiries are similarly formatted, aimed at inciting each of my informants to tell stories that articulate their experiences as second generation immigrants. By privileging the telling of stories, I endeavor to conduct ethnographic research that does not overlook anomalies and outliers, tangential anecdotes and peripheral experiences that might ultimately prove integral to our understanding the variety of linkages and modes of identifications that may (or may not) pervade the lives of second generation Brazilians. Before narrowing the ethnographic lens to focus on the
distinctly transnational connections among them, I thoroughly explore these linkages - or lack there of – and my informants’ unique experiences with respect to the multiple localities, cultures, languages, and nations which have contributed to the circumstances of their birth but not necessarily the trajectory of their lives. And exploration requires a degree of flexibility, methodological and theoretical. In such a study of second generations immigrants, as I seek to better understand the field of possible cultural and national identifications - be they “transnational” or not – that engender their lives, I come to terms with the multiplicity of voices, including my own, that offer a multiplicity of answers to my central question: Do transnationalism and transnationality persist generationally and how do we speak of its presence or absence, acknowledging simultaneously its relation to first generation transnationalism and its uniqueness from it? However, despite the obstacles I confront in answering this question, ultimately my task is to make sense of the data that I collect: to wade through methodological and ethical dilemmas to some kind of synthesis, never sacrificing scrupulous listening for the appeal of grand theorizing, nor forgetting my obligation to honor the voices of my interlocutors in service of more amenable analysis. It must see part and whole together and simultaneously. The question is what are the best techniques for doing so honestly, for navigating this passage carefully and methodically, which I have done my best to adumbrate.

**Of Pedagogy, Towards Dialogue: On Transformation of Transnational Scholarship**

The ultimate goal of this project – if I must momentarily ascribe to it a unifying objective - is not to open and subsequently close a discussion of second generation transnationalism nor to provide any single exegesis of my field work data that locates second generation immigrants within existing paradigms of understanding transnational practices and identity. In this sense, the intention of this ethnography betrays its formal academic designation: this is not a conventional "thesis." My ethnographic research has not yielded an orderly classification of transnationalism amongst second generation immigrants nor has it exhausted the possible morphologies of this phenomenon: this is not a neat ethnography. At least, it is not neat in the sense that, having read the thing
cover to cover, one cannot say with confidence, *I now understand, in all of its complexity, what second generation transnationalism ‘is.’* Rather, I fully expect and intend to leave my readers in a state of partial aporia, for that is where I too find myself, uncertain and eager for further exploration. I do not mean to imply that I have simply walked in circles, only to arrive, after months of research and writing, at my point of departure, with no questions answered, no mysteries solved. On the contrary, this project has proved in many ways illuminating. Not illuminating, however, in the sense that, from a cacophony of voices all articulating their unique experiences as second generation immigrants, a single harmony can be heard; although, there are several moments when these voices do, in fact, coalesce. Rather, this project has shed light on the cacophonous multiplicity of voices itself as worthy of research. I assert therefore that the dissonances that arise amongst the various stories presented in this ethnography are by no means a discredit to its potential and place amongst the literature of transnational studies, for its intention is not simply to announce the limits of scholarship but to point the way towards its extension and transformation. It also hopes to explore new vocabularies for novel concepts and to re-deploy the discursive terms of the discipline in playful ways, and in so doing, provide a point departure for further play.

This project does not, in other words, serve a completely pedagogical purpose. I certainly hope that my research may elucidate areas of immigrant experience in the United States that have been otherwise overlooked; but, whether or not it proves illuminating in this sense, my project takes aim, above all, at a provoking interdisciplinary dialogue. Indeed, if my research has led me to some paramount conclusion, it would be that unbridled conversation, as opposed to the more orthodox methodological structure that might characterize earlier anthropological work, very often leads to great discovery. Thus, using the cacophonous nature of my research as a guide, I would like to frame the broader goals of this project as dialogic rather than pedagogical. Of course, I must concede that this ethnography is a product of extensive study and tutelage, and I am therefore indebted to the exceedingly fertile academic soil in which it has grown. Nevertheless, it seeks to engender conversation rather than to lecture or prove expertise in any particular area of study: a product of pedagogy indeed, but not entirely pedagogical in scope. Simply put, I hope that this ethnography and others like it will shift
the lens of transnational studies towards the experiences of second generation immigrants and thus incite fuller and more inclusive dialogue about their unique lives and identities.
Chapter I

Transnationalism: Modalities and Morphologies

In order to provide an adequate anthropological answer to the central question of this ethnography, it may first be necessary to answer another question entirely: What constitutes “transnationalism” and “transnationality?” Indeed, it would prove difficult to answer any questions regarding the application of these terms to a particular demographic without first identifying to what phenomena they refer. Nevertheless, the goal of this project is by no means to ascertain a fixed definition for the term “transnationalism,” nor to debunk or displace existing definitions which structure an immense number of overlapping academic and intellectual discussions of transnational subject matter. Thus, the question, What constitutes “transnationalism” and “transnationality?” must be reconsidered and honed if I am to avoid wandering aimlessly through a discursive maze. A more reasonable query might be: What constitutes “transnationalism” and “transnationality” for the purposes of this ethnography?

My research takes as its point of departure the premises articulated by Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc in their essay entitled Transnational Projects: A New Perspective, in which they define “transnationalism” as “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded relations that link together societies of origin and settlement,” and “transnationality” as the identities of those social agents engaged consciously in this activity. Considering the ethnographic methodology of this project, this definition, which calls attention to the participation of active agents - which is to say, real people and communities - in the initiation and maintenance of social and cultural connections that transcend national boundaries, serves as an excellent theoretical touchstone. However, immigrants build and sustain these connections in a variety of ways, and I find it helpful to turn briefly to the work of

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23 Does transnationalism and transnationality persist generationally and how do we speak of its presence or absence, acknowledging simultaneously its relation to first generation transnationalism and its uniqueness from it?

Stephen Vertovec in order to clarify the breadth and scope of the different “processes” that Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc describe. In his short explanatory text entitled simply *Transnationalism*, Vertovec identifies six essential manifestations of transnationalism upon which, he asserts, the current discourse and scholarship of transnational studies is conceptually based. According to Vertovec, *transnationalism* may be treated as a social morphology, a state of consciousness, a mode of cultural reproduction, an avenue of capital, a site of political engagement, or a (re)construction of locality and place. I concern myself primarily with three of these “takes” on transnationalism:

(a) a social morphology  
(b) a mode of cultural reproduction  
(c) a state of consciousness

Thus, I borrow from Vertovec’s more or less comprehensive list the conceptual categories that pertain specifically to the social and cultural experiences of individuals and communities rather than to political parties or the flow of goods and capital. I have also chosen to add to this list a fourth index,

(d) a mode of identity performance

in order to call attention to the ways transnationality entails a constant subjective negotiation of many cultural and national discourses. I deploy these categories as theoretical points of reference in my own ethnographic work, and thus it may prove beneficial, perhaps even essential, to more clearly and concretely distinguish each of these modalities of transnationalism.

*The Transnational Social Field & Systems of Power*
In order to properly consider how transnationalism constitutes a social morphology – which is to say, a way that communities organize and sustain connections across borders – it is important to first acknowledge the circumstances of multi-layered state power that influence transnational social life. Nina Glick Schiller and sociologist Peggy Levitt’s notion of transnational social fields proves exceedingly helpful in understanding these power dynamics, particularly because their work calls attention to both the repressive and ideological authority of various polities over transnational actors without condescending the agency of those actors to resist and subvert their control. In their essay entitled Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society, Glick Schiller and Levitt extend existing anthropological and sociological notions of social fields and apply them specifically to transnational phenomena, borrowing from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu an attention to the ways that social relations are structured and restructured by power, and adopting from the Manchester School of Anthropology the notion that individuals may belong to multiple social fields at once. Glick Schiller and Levitt define a transnational social field as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed,” building upon the aforementioned theoretical premises but emphasizing that “national boundaries are not necessarily contiguous with the boundaries of social fields” in the context of transnationalism. This assertion both acknowledges the agency of individual actors within trans-border social and cultural communities and simultaneously recognizes the particular mechanics of power involved in being in or belonging to large scale trans-border social networks that sustain connections to multiple nations. Though transnationalism may emerge as a result of increasingly porous national boundaries, insofar as individuals find themselves embedded in transnational social fields, Glick Schiller and Levitt argue that they are subject, whether by consent or coercion, to multi-local systems of state power. Transnational individuals and communities are therefore “embedded in multiple legal and political institutions that determine access…action…and organization.”

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 1003.
subtle systems of power that permeate transnational social relations - what Michel Foucault calls the “microphysics”\textsuperscript{28} of power - must also be considered as a force which structures behavior and transnational practice. In other words, the hegemonic powers of the nation-states are not only manifest in more centralized regulatory authorities such as the state apparatus and coercive class relations, but also in more diffuse forms of ideological control that legitimate certain cultural and national identities. Thus, various layers of power work to shape the landscape of transnational life; however, to assume that transnationals are simply battered and bullied by multiple repressive and ideological state apparatuses would be to ignore their potential as agents capable of acting back upon these multi-layered systems of power.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, when attempting to determine whether an individual or group of individuals qualifies as transnational, one might consider both their participation in one or more transnational social fields – which is to say, in multidimensional networks of communication, solidarity and exchange that span borders – as well as in systems of power, both regulatory and ideological, that structure these complex interactions but that may be influenced by their own social action. This focus on the multidimensionality of power and agency is preserved in my own ethnographic work, as I attempt to better understand how second generation Brazilian immigrants are subject to manifold systems of obligation and reciprocity that arise as national solidarities collide, and how they may work to change the terms of engagement with their transnational social fields. Moreover, I pay particularly close attention to the interpenetration of different national and cultural systems of power and meaning, which is to say, how they are brought into conversation with each other through second generation immigrants’ claiming of agency and identity in two or more nations, languages and cultures. Transnational social fields are engaged differently by different kinds of transnational people and communities, and it is precisely this difference upon which this project hopes


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29}Glick Schiller and Levitt provide several excellent examples of this feedback loop, whereby transnationals and trans-migrants shift the positions of their “home” and “host” nation-states in the world economic order and restructure systems of social and political power at home and abroad. Former Iraqi exiles, they argue, are crucial actors in the rebuilding of the Iraqi state and the mobilization of Lithuanian immigrants living in the United States served as the catalyst for the emergence of Lithuania. (Levitt, P. and Glick Schiller N., “Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective.” (2004): p. 1009.)}
to focus its anthropological lens. Insofar as transnationals live and act and are acted upon within the web of connections that Glick Schiller and Levitt call a transnational social field, determining to what extent second generation immigrants participate in these networks and examining the particular texture of their participation may contribute to a more complete understanding of second generation immigrants as unique transnationals and may, in fact, indicate the need for new nomenclature. Above all, the transnational social field perspective furnishes the discipline of transnational studies with a convenient way of conceptualizing how individuals live “here and there,” and how this process entails managing different cultural affinities and national solidarities with recourse to multiple systems of power.

_Sustaining the Social Here and There: Transnationalism as Social Morphology_

When thinking critically about transnationalism as social morphology a brief foray into the study of ethnic diasporas, which Khachig Tölölyan calls the “exemplary communities of the transnational moment,” serves as an equally important point of departure. According to Tölölyan, the term _diaspora_ itself, once used primarily in reference to the historical dispersion of Jewish, Armenian, and Greek communities across the globe, has come to occupy “a larger semantic domain” that includes in its scope immigrants and migrants as well as exiles, expatriates, and refugees. Thus, to the extent that the emergent meaning(s) of the term “diaspora” have in common the notion of movement, connectivity and dispersion without necessarily being lachrymose or born of oppression and forced exile, one might indeed think of them as paradigmatic transnational communities. Professors of political science William Safran and Gabriel Sheffer argue that the signature characteristic of the diaspora is a “triadic relationship” among “globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and the homeland states and contexts

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31 Ibid.
whence they or their forbears came.” Thus Safran and Sheffer propose a theoretical classification of diaspora and communities in diaspora that is not altogether dissimilar in focus or scope from what Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc consider fundamental elements of transnationalism. The latter calls attention to the cross-border interconnectivity of transnational networks and the agency of individual actors within those networks as hallmarks of transnationalism just as Safran and Sheffer emphasize both the ongoing connection of homeland to hostland(s) and the collective self-identification of those ethnic groups considered diasporas. Sociologist Peggy Levitt also offers an analysis of diasporas that connect them structurally to transnational communities which are, in her words, “the building blocks of diasporas that may or may not take shape.” Her own research of Dominican and Brazilian immigrant communities in the larger New England Area offers further insight into the important relationship, ideological and phenomenological, between transnationalism and diaspora, demonstrating that if “a fiction of congregation takes hold [in a transnational community] then a diaspora emerges.”

Given that this project refers to literature and studies of globally dispersed Brazilians and Brazilian communities, the term “diaspora” is essential not only for describing their condition of dispersion but also for grasping the transnational linkages that they maintain and renew. It must be noted that though the diaspora might in some cases be considered a model transnational community, these terms (diaspora and transnational) are not mutually constitutive; rather, Tölöyan’s reference to a “transnational moment” and Levitt’s notion of transnational communities as “building

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32 Vertovec, Transnationalism. pg. 4.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 “Diaspora” proves a useful term in any discussion of transnationalism precisely because it serves to underscore the continued importance of place and locality, concepts that are often overlooked within a social science discourse that is increasingly interested in matters of fluidity and rooted-ness. Despite the necessary focus of transnational studies on networks and movements, Tölöyan, Kokot and Alfonso assert that ethnographic work should “not neglect realities of sedentary diasporic life” as traditional definitions of the term diaspora remind us that the "here" and "there" never cease to be real places that continue to operate as important frames of reference for individuals on a symbolic as well as a physical level. Thus, diasporas not only provide a means of better conceptualizing and discussing transnational communities, but also help refocus the lens of transnational studies on what Tölöyan calls “the logic of the sedentary” which, he argues, “persists in the lived experience of the transnational, even if it is currently neglected in scholarship.” (Kokot, Waltraud, Khachig Tölöyan, and Carolin Alfonso. Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 4-5.
blocks” helps illuminate the potential diasporas that may arise from transnational linkages. If, for the purposes of this ethnography, dispersed Brazilian communities are to be considered as a constituting a fledgling diaspora, the first concrete task of this project will be to determine whether these communities indeed maintain the aforementioned “triadic relationship.” In other words, if this constellation of potentially transnational communities sustains multi-local connections that transcend borders, remains embedded in “day-to-day realities of communication, exchange and reciprocity”\(^{36}\) with homeland cities and villages, and simultaneously maintains a high degree of social cohesion and collective identity, then a Brazilian diaspora has indeed taken shape. These are the criteria - borrowed from Safran, Sheffer, and Basch et al. – that I employ in order to better identify the qualities of dispersed Brazilian immigrant communities that more concretely testify to their status as “diasporic.”

I use the term “fledgling” here to describe Brazilians scattered across the globe and particularly the United States because, in comparison to other nations, Brazil’s history of outmigration is relatively young, having gained momentum only in the 1980’s. Despite its relative youth, it is important to briefly consider the causes for Brazilian emigration, as the conditions of an immigrant group’s departure from their homeland often characterize their diaspora if one develops at all. In this sense, the circumstances of Brazilian immigration pose a distinct theoretical problem if one is to consider Brazilian immigrant communities in diaspora, for the history of Brazilian immigration itself is not easily traced to a particular impetus. Instead, it would seem that despite their relatively synchronized moment of departure (i.e. the 1980’s), Brazilian immigrants to the United States and elsewhere did so for a variety of reasons that may not, as is the case in the classical diasporas (i.e. Jewish, Armenian, Greek), be a direct result of turmoil or coercion. However, that Vertovec briefly refers to diasporas as “created as a result of voluntary or forced migration,”\(^{37}\) the sentiment of struggle and oppression is therefore not essential to his analysis of contemporary diasporas. Indeed, as I have suggested, novel definitions of diaspora and diasporic communities increasingly depart from the classical models’ emphasis on coerced migration and exile, focusing instead on sustained

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 4.
\(^{37}\) Ibid.
homeland-hostland connections and collective identity, as evinced by Saffron and Sheffer’s “triadic relationship model” of diasporas and social relationships. Need the circumstances of Brazilian immigration in the 1980’s be uniform or consistent with a shared struggle for dispersed Brazilian communities to be considered nodes in a larger diaspora? I assert that, given the recent transformations within diaspora studies that have challenged the traditional limits of term itself, they need not be.

These developments in diaspora studies and scholarship thus serve as an effective analytic criteria when considering dispersed Brazilian migrant communities as an emergent diaspora, as these communities, particularly those in the United States, maintain the aforementioned kinds of social relationships despite the terms of their migration from Brazil which are not entirely a product of coercion. As Professor of Geography and Anthropology Alan P. Marcus of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, suggests, the circumstances of the influx of Brazil immigrants to the United States and other countries such as Japan is more likely a product of a “geographical imagination,” a projection of migrants’ symbolic conceptions of place. Marcus’ research takes David Lowenthal’s assertion that “every image and idea about the world is compounded.. of personal experience, learning and memory” as its theoretical point of departure, and attempts to better understand the transnational orientation of Brazilian immigrant communities living in the United States by exploring individual and collective reasons for migration. Though economic hardships and unique social pressures certainly contributed to the momentum of outmigration, Marcus’ ethnographic research demonstrates that many Brazilians who immigrated to the United States in the 1980’s did so as a means of “[fulfilling] a dream” and satisfying a “geographical imagination” that envisions the United States as a land of economic promise, cultural discovery, and, perhaps, escape from individual circumstances of oppression or restlessness. Nevertheless, Marcus maintains that the impetus to migrate the United States is oftentimes “[immediately followed] by the dream

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40 Marcus, Alan P. "Brazilian Immigration To The United States And The Geographical Imagination." p. 487.
of one day returning to Brazil.”[^41] In fact, Brazilian migration to the United States is considered by Takeyuki Tsuda to be a circular phenomenon, a sort of “yo-yo” migration that does not necessarily find Brazilian migrants exclusively rooted in either their sending cities in Brazil or their receiving cities in the United States[^42]; instead, as Peggy Levitt asserts, Brazilian migration to the Untied States is not “linear or sequential” but rather “[rotates] back and forth and [changes] direction over time.”[^43] Here, Levitt’s and Tsuda’s observations regarding the markedly mobile emerging Brazilian diaspora are reminiscent of Paul Gilroy’s distinction between the terms “roots” and “routes” to describe diaspora and the diasporic experience.[^44] Used primarily by Gilroy to theorize a Pan-African diaspora that accounts for the multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic communities dispersed across the globe via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the notion that diasporas can be characterized not necessarily by their rootedness in one or another locale, but by their being routed through shared conditions of transit, may be helpful in conceptualizing Brazil’s diasporic communities in the United States insofar as the geographical imagination that facilitates Brazilian outmigration and the nostalgia that promotes an eventual return to Brazil are subject to a sort of blurring. This does not suggest, however, that Brazilians in diaspora lose or forfeit strong connection to their places of residence in the United States or those villages, towns and urban centers from which they originally immigrated; rather, the importance of routes as well as roots among dispersed Brazilian immigrant communities suggests that perhaps they depart in many ways from more classical notions of diaspora and represent an emergent diaspora that bears some resemblance to Gilroy’s more flexible interpretation.

Perhaps the critical task of theorizing a Brazilian diaspora, is instead to underscore the multivalent systems of power to which Brazilians in diaspora are thus connected and highlight the transnational linkages that weave together sustained solidarities with and interest in “home” and “host” countries. These power structures represent another significant overlap between the characteristics of transnational

[^41]: Ibid.
communities and those of diasporas: neither are free-floating, state-less polities but are interpolated by the political, economic, and ideological and state apparatuses of both “home” and “host” countries. Tölölyan asserts that to “affirm that diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment is not to write a premature obituary of the nation state, which remains a privileged form of polity.” Here Tölölyan provides a critical observation that, in the face of transnationalism, nation-states still confront the permeability of their borders, demanding of their diasporas distinct obligations and contributions. Perhaps Tölölyan’s claim that diasporas are “sometimes the paradigmatic Other of the nation-state and at other times its ally, its lobby and…its precursor” serves to more effectively characterize the qualities of diaspora that are most useful when critically examining the dispersed Brazilian immigrant community. Whatever the case may be, a closer analysis of the texture of these communities is necessary in order to consider them as constituent units of a greater diaspora.

According to Jose Carvalho’s 1996 study entitled "The Balance of International Migration Flows in Brazil in 80's," nearly two million Brazilians over the age of ten left the country in 1980 and another half million in the next decade. More recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates that just over three million Brazilians now reside outside of Brazil namely in North America, specifically the United States. Nevertheless, sheer volume of outmigration does not establish these dispersed Brazilians as a diaspora; rather, their sustained participation in homeland politics, economic contributions to homeland in the form of remittances, and preservation of cultural values despite integration into host land society prove more convincing indices of diasporic status. According to Ana Cristina Barga Martes’ study of Brazilian immigrant remittances entitled The Commitment of Return, remittances from Brazilians abroad reached a total of 5.6 billion US dollars in 2004 and have risen steadily since. Positive and negative factors of remittances notwithstanding, the volume of money returned to Brazil, formally

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46 Ibid. p. 233.
or informally, by its dispersed immigrant populations is second only in Latin America to Mexico, indicating strong reciprocal economic activity amongst Brazil’s dispersed immigrant population. With respect to the contributions of Brazilian immigrants to homeland politics, specifically through voting in Brazilian elections, participation is narrower in scope, as the approximately two hundred thousand absentee Brazilian voters comprise only 6.6% of the total population abroad. Yet, organizations like the Division of Brazilian Communities Abroad, which coordinates conferences aimed at voicing the concerns of dispersed Brazilians and encouraging political participation of Brazilians outside of Brazil, demonstrate a strong impetus for political activism and mobilization amongst Brazilian immigrant communities, and an acute awareness of the political potential of a diaspora. Moreover, various media organizations work to sustain cultural and civic engagement amongst immigrant populations, serving namely as conduits for the dissemination of Brazilian news and as a means of shaping perceptions of the Brazilian community abroad. Massachusetts alone has one hundred and fourteen Brazilian radio stations and the Brazilian immigrant community in the United States maintains three major television networks that broadcast daily. Brazilian Independence Day festivals held annually at Boston’s Soldier’s Field draw Brazilians of different classes, ethnicities, faiths and from different Brazilian urban centers into communion with one another, demonstrating, beyond the sphere of media consumption, a cohesive immigrant community that affirms their solidarity despite dispersion.

Of course, one cannot overlook the many ways in which the Brazilian diaspora is engaged – economically and politically – with their host land societies, for another important aspect of diasporic social formations, as Vertovec asserts, is the extent of their integration into their receiving countries. Brazilians in the United States, for example, contribute nearly sixty billion dollars to the Gross Domestic Product and another seven billion to federal and state governments through taxes. Furthermore, over one hundred thousand Brazilians have acquired permanent residency in the United States and the number of naturalized Brazilian immigrants has increased consistently since 2000,

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Vertovec. Transnationalism. pg. 4
reaching its peak between 2008 and 2009 by which time sixty thousand Brazilians had effectively acquired dual citizenship.\(^{54}\) Though the aforementioned statistics provide only a brief summary of the character and depth of dispersed Brazilian communities, namely in the United States, I argue that such information is sufficient to claim for these communities the status of an emergent diaspora. Furthermore, that the term “diaspora” itself has begun to permeate the discourse of Brazilian intellectuals, at home and overseas, underscores my assertion that Brazilians abroad deserve recognition as constituting a diaspora with a distinct consciousness of their status as such.

Yet, the ethnic diversity of Brazil itself and of Brazilian communities in diaspora must be acknowledged, as classical models of ethnic diasporas all exhibit a degree of ethnic cohesion and consistency which is markedly absent from the Brazilian diaspora. That is not to say that individual diasporic Brazilian communities do not, in fact, cluster around shared ethnicity, religious institutions or particular homeland locales; nevertheless, the enormous swathe of geographical territory as well as ethnic, religious and socio-economic topography that Brazil itself encompasses produces a variety of diasporic communities that may be vastly dissimilar and maintain symbolic and physical connection to many different “Brazils.” Stuart Hall’s notion of diasporas as articulated through disjuncture – which is to say, a constellation of dispersed communities that are “related as much through their differences as through their similarities”\(^ {55}\) – may provide insight into the nature of the Brazilian diaspora as a structure in which “no necessary correspondence or expressive homology can be assumed as given.”\(^ {56}\) Instead, the Brazilian diaspora arguably demonstrates the relations of “difference within unity” that intellectuals like Hall and Paul Gilroy - themselves concerned with theorizing a Black African diaspora outside the singular frames of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “nation,” – use as means of “[accounting] for a diversity of black ‘takes’ on diaspora.”\(^ {57}\) It may seem unnecessary to invoke the work of Gilroy and Hall in reference to a Brazilian diaspora, granted that Brazilians in diaspora share the latter frame of identification, that is,  

\(^{56}\)Ibid.  
\(^{57}\)Ibid.
identification with a particular nation; however, it must be noted that to speak of the Brazilian diaspora is not to suggest the existence of a homogenous ethnic, racial or religious community, but rather to call attention to dispersion of people unified with the “verde e amarelo,” that is, with the nation. Though an evangelical Brazilian Pastor and a Capoeira instructor from Bahia, both in diaspora, may maintain different transnational ties to different locales, their recognition of a shared Brazilian identity that simultaneously recognizes differences within that identity testifies to a diasporic experience that departs from classical conceptions of the term. Every Brazilian, whether at home or abroad, has not necessarily visited the Cristo, nor does every citizen have a passion for football; in fact, these may be stereotypical visions of Brazilian culture, artifices of a distinctly American geographical imagination and propensity for exoticism that paints Brazil to be a cultural monolith, defined by leisure and beauty embodied in postcards of the Copa Cabana. In reality, as I have done my best to adumbrate in this brief section, Brazil is not so homogenous, nor is its diaspora.

Thus, to recognize dispersed Brazilian immigrant communities as an emergent diaspora is to acknowledge them firstly as social formations that operate across and in spite of national boundaries, secondly as simultaneously embedded in multiple systems of national power, and thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, as cohesive despite and oftentimes through their ethnic, religious and cultural differences. Therefore, to speak of second generation immigrant transnationalism is to situate them within these structures of power and acknowledge that, regardless of identification or identity, they are necessarily entangled to some degree in the interplay of national solidarities, citizenships and obligations that characterize the ongoing negotiations of diasporic communities between host and home societies. A critical task of this ethnography will be to determine the depth and quality of this engagement.

Reproducing Culture Here and There: Transnationalism as a Mode of Cultural Reproduction

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58 This term, meaning “green and yellow,” refers to the colors of the Brazilian flag as symbol of the nation.
Transnationalism, according to Vertovec, is also associated with a certain blending or hybridity of cultural phenomena that yields emergent forms of cultural and social expression, particularly amongst transnational youth. Yet, the mixing of different cultural elements that transnationalism and transnationality might produce can be conceptualized as having a profound socio-cultural effect on real individuals at all stages of this process of cultural reproduction. Thus, as cultural values and norms are transmitted from generation to generation, transnationalism – which is to say, the movement of people, capital and ideas between the home and host countries in which an individual, family or larger group has its roots - serve to significantly shape the expression of those values and norms across generations. Indeed, immigrants may develop hybridized cultures through practices that engage various components of homeland and host land cultures to form an aggregate mode of cultural expression which, when passed to subsequent generations, is submitted to further bricolage.

As early as 1916, a similar blending of disparate cultural elements has been observed and, in some cases, celebrated by such writers and intellectuals as Randolph Bourne, who, in his essay entitled *Trans-National America*, praises those immigrants who “[meet] with a common American background…yet retain that distinctiveness of their native cultures and their national spiritual slants.”59 Though the term “transnationalism,” as it is used in contemporary social-science discourse, has appropriated vast new meaning since the turn of the century, when Bourne deployed it to describe *acclimatized* rather than *assimilated* immigrants, the concept of cultural blending, as opposed to rigid nationalism, is arguably under construction, though not yet active, in his assessment of a coming “cosmopolitan interchange”60 in America. Thus, the immigrant’s experience of cohabitant cultures is not, in itself, a novel concept. But more noteworthy for the purposes of this ethnography is Bourne’s assertion that this same interchange functions trans-generationally, as he considers both immigrant youth and the children of foreign born immigrants to best exemplify a cultural crossroads. Indeed, it is not “what we are now” that concerns Bourne, but rather “what [the] plastic next generation might become

60 Ibid., p. 97.
in the light of a new cosmopolitan ideal."61 Of course, Bourne’s utilitarian agenda, that is, his interest in harnessing the “creative power” of immigrants for the construction of an American ideal, cannot be overlooked; nevertheless, his essay illuminates an important aspect of the transnational experience—the cultural exchange between sending and receiving cultures—and its implications for multiple generations of immigrants. Thus, when considering transnationalism as a form of cultural production and reproduction, Bourne’s early reflections on the contextual socio-cultural phenomenon he calls “transnationalism” serves to emphasize cultural combination not only as a hallmark of transnational individuals and communities, but also as means of better understanding how transnational individuals and communities transmit cultural values from generation to generation. His fledgling assessments of transnational cultural reproduction may also help to more fully illuminate a contemporary discourse on the subject, as one can observe the transformation of the key concepts from Bourne’s essay into a new set of discursive terms such as “hybridity” and “fluidity.” While Bourne calls attention to the coordination of cultural elements towards a “wholeness and soundness of enthusiasm and purpose,”62 contemporary thinkers such as Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall take cultural blending, that is, the actually hybridization of cultures rather than the structured exchange between them, as their theoretical point of departure. These new terms, however, cannot be properly deployed without first acknowledging the increasingly global movement of people, capital and ideas that makes them so powerful in the post-modern era and that sets them apart from Bourne’s terminology in scope and content.

Indeed, to speak of cultural reproduction in a contemporary transnational context, one must necessarily recognize the proliferation of global media and the improvement of communications technology that creates, according to Arjun Appadurai, great disjunctures amongst diasporic populations and has nudged cultural reproduction further in to a post-nostalgic phase. That is to say, globalization, particularly the availability of new media, has arguably had a profound impact on transnational individuals and communities, further problematizing the boundaries of the nation-state and the “politics

61 Ibid., p. 89.
62 Ibid., p. 95.
of heritage and nostalgia." No longer, in other words, is cultural reproduction confined by the firm hand of history to the reification of tradition. Appadurai offers an interesting, albeit ambitious, theoretical model for understanding this intersection of globalization and transnational cultural reproduction that explores the implications of a new global cultural economy, trading traditional center-periphery models for a framework that considers five “imagined landscapes” as constitutive of the complex, overlapping and “disjunctive” order of global flows. Of these “five dimensions,” the ethnoscape describes, in Appadurai’s words, the “landscape of persons who constitute a shifting world,” which is to say, “the individual agent[s]” who represent the “last locus” of his set of imagined landscapes where one finds the local community and its “intimate face-to-face” groups (i.e. families, neighborhoods, villages etc.) “shot through with the woof” of global capitalism. Though Appadurai has a tendency to exaggerate the power of global systems of capital and media dissemination over the socio-cultural texture of local communities and often discounts the agency of individuals within those communities, his “ethnoscape,” insofar as it attempts capture the complex crossroads that might describe contemporary transnational cultural reproduction, is a useful concept for the purposes of this ethnography, particularly because second generation Brazilian immigrants have at their disposal a broad array of American and Brazilian media imagery and cultural codes. Whether or not their exposure to these assorted materials significantly impacts their lives and identities is a question best answered ethnographically in order that generalizations regarding the impact of globalization be avoided.

Nevertheless, it may prove helpful to briefly explore several examples of transnational cultural reproduction that demonstrate how cultural interpenetration – which may be attributable to the proliferation of global media imagery and swift modes of international communication but certainly – creates significant generational disjunctures in transnational immigrant communities.

Given that literary and social-scientific accounts of cultural hybridity amongst young Brazilian immigrants in the United States are scarce, briefly exploring the

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65 Ibid. p. 297
66 Ibid.
implications of transnationalism as a mode of cultural reproduction amongst South-Asian immigrant communities living in the United States, particularly immigrant youth from the Indian subcontinent and children of the Indian diaspora who self identify as *desis*, may serve to explain the cultural blending that often develops as result of a transnational lifestyle and, as is increasingly the case amongst immigrant youth, the availability of global media sources. According to Shalini Shankar, this term – “desi” – represents an important moment for diaspora studies insofar as it marks a distinct discursive shift from the conception of South Asians in the United States as “immigrants longing to return to a homeland” to a more contemporary vision of South Asian immigrants as “public consumers and producers of distinctive, widely circulating cultural and linguistic forms.” That is to say, the term “desi” itself problematizes traditional notions of the nation-state and its boundaries, as well as categories of race, language, religion and caste that have, in the past, served to demarcate social class hierarchies amongst a wide range of South and South-East Asian peoples. In fact, Shankar asserts that the title has come to refer – at least amongst South-East Asian teens in the United States - to anyone of South Asian descent. Although it would be difficult to assert the existence of a monolithic South Asian diaspora given the vast differences which characterize the Indian subcontinent and its surrounding nations, the term “desi” does seem to be a product of the “transnational moment” insofar as it enables a great deal of interplay between South-East Asian and American media subcultures in the lives of those to whom the title refers. In other words, the use of the term “desi” marks a shift away from notions of cultural reproduction as bound by the limits of the nation-state and the rigidity of class, religious and ethnic difference and toward a reflexive conception of cultural production as fluid and changing, engaging transnationally with “home” and “host” cultures while upsetting the hegemonic power structures associated with these very terms.

Indeed, according to Kirin Narayan, Desi teens are “masters of code-switching,” a term used by anthropologists to describe the process by which individuals move, often seamlessly, between socio-cultural systems of meaning. Indeed, Shankar argues that desis

traverse disparate cultural logics that rely on these polarities to construct a meaningful sense of “ownership and belonging in all these realms.” Thus, desis might be considered as exemplary transnationals insofar as this hybridization of immediate and distant cultural elements represents the inter-connectivity and agency Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc identify as essential elements of transnational engagement. Indeed, the “micro-practices” of desi youth – a term used by Michael de Certeau to describe “the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught is in nets of discipline” – call upon transnational networks in order to more fluidly navigate disparate cultural contexts. More importantly, the blending of cultural elements from these distinct realms, though complex in nature, can serve as a subjectively bolstering force. In fact, Vertovec argues that there is a distinct, albeit paradoxical, empowerment in the development of these transnational practices insofar as “the connection [elsewhere] makes a difference [here],” which is to say, the hybridization of different cultural practices works, in many cases, to the transnational subject’s advantage, opening up new avenues for social action, mobility and individual or collective expression. These are the quotidian cultural practices, the textured everyday enactments of transnationality, which I interrogate in my own ethnography as I attempt to better understand how second generation Brazilian youth navigate such disjunctures through distinctive use of language and creative approaches to media and technology. It is important to note, however, that manifestations of transnationalism as a form of cultural reproduction are not necessarily positive or empowering, and that while transnational micro-practices, particularly amongst immigrant youth, may indeed challenge and upset multiple cultural constraints and systems of power, their effects are limited. Desi youth, according to Shankar, “exercise an agency that is bounded” and their “ability to transform their communities is...bounded.” To suggest that the transnational micro-practices which manipulate multi-local social networks somehow liberates their actors completely from the repressive and ideological apparatuses of either “home” or “host” culture would be a precarious assumption. Rather, it is important to conceptualize

transnational cultural reproduction as problematizing the “borders” – geographical, cultural, economic, political and ideological – of the nation-state while being simultaneously embedded in systems of power that always exercise their influence. Nevertheless, desis’ eclectic borrowing and blending of multiple cultural forms speaks to an increasingly fluid and playful reproduction of culture along transnational lines, particularly amongst immigrant youth.

It may be helpful here to briefly consider a textured illustration of what might be termed transnational cultural reproduction, that is, one that can be studied ethnographically, for it is in this vain that I proceed with my own research and analysis. To find such a “case study,” one need only turn to the disciplinary realm of ethnomusicology. For example, the popularity of hybridized cultural art forms such as bhangra music, a genre that draws its influence from both traditional Punjabi music and dance as well as popular Western musical styles (i.e. Hip-Hop, Rap), testifies to the increasingly transnational forms of cultural reproduction that recognize what Gilroy calls “degrees of overlap,” allowing for a “convivial multi-culture” that celebrates “diversity and difference in multiple [cultural] forms.”73 The inclusivity of “desiness,” a term used by Helen Kim in her essay A desi diaspora?, and the expression of this inclusivity through bhangra music helps to better conceptualize transnational cultural reproduction as it functions at the level of the individual. Kim describes desi night clubs in London as roaring with heterogeneous Asian youth and the “hybrid sounds of bhangra”74 while Gayatri Gopinath, in her essay entitled “Bombay, U.K., Yoruba City”: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora, notices the comingling of traditional Punjabi folk song and a “ragamuffin” beat in a joint musical venture by a female British-based Indian folksinger Rama and male dance-hall rapper Cheshire Cat who, according to Gopinath, “reads as white.”75 Here, Gopinath describes desi youth culture as the crossroads of multiple forms of cultural reproduction along intersecting transnational lines: bhangra depends on a continued negotiation of different cultures and national spaces as well as

transnational social fields. In fact, Gopinath advocates for a reading of bhangra music as “diasporic text” that “demands a radical reworking of the hierarchical relation between diaspora and the nation,” which is to say, a markedly transnational performance of culture and community that reconfigures, while not completely obliterating, the terms of national solidarity. What emerges in bhangra is both a culturally eclectic musical genre and an exemplary model of the transnational moment insofar as it shapes the manner in which “culture” is reinterpreted by immigrant youth. To consider bhangra music as a form of transnational cultural reproduction is not, however, to suggest that all transnational cultural reproduction is as inclusive in scope or as artistic in form, only that it allows for more hybridity and often represents, as Gilroy suggests, a “critical engagement between ‘routes’ and ‘roots.’” That is to say, bhangra music and other forms of transnational, diasporic cultural reproduction represent a point of disjuncture that upsets the “tidiness” of culture and its transmission generationally. Thus, this project aims at investigating the “messiness” of cultural reproduction in the transnational moment in hopes of better understanding the second generation immigrant experience as either akin to or divergent from other increasingly hybridized reinterpretations of “home” and “host” cultures amongst dispersed, diasporic communities. I approach my fieldwork with particular attention to the ways that American born Brazilians negotiate this inter-cultural space as means of contestation or deployment of alliance and focus, as does Shankar with respect to desi youth, on their sense of ownership and agency within these spaces.

**Thinking Here and There: Transnationalism as a Type of Consciousness**

To explore transnationalism as a type of consciousness is to further broach the intersection and interdependence of transnational studies and diaspora studies granted that there is significant discussion within the social sciences regarding a sort of “diasporic consciousness,” which might also be interpreted as a “transnational consciousness.” Both

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76 Ibid., p. 304.
are arguably characterized by multiple overlapping cultural identifications and a marked awareness of being “home away from home.” For the purposes of this ethnography, I consider consciousness as intimately tied to experience, insofar as how we imagine ourselves as belonging to a nation or a culture is part and parcel of who we consider ourselves to be. That is to say, an individual’s identification with a particular community based on shared social and cultural experiences can arguably be understood as an influential component of his or her identity. Thus, I refer to consciousness as way of imagining the self through the lens of social, a “positioning” of the subject with respect to experiences that are often collective and lend themselves to a sense of belonging.

Yet, the neatness of this perspective is upset once consciousness is considered with regards to the cultural disjuncture and difference that increasingly come to characterize diasporas and other transnational communities. Indeed, since the rise of cultural studies in the 1990’s, the field of diaspora scholarship has witnessed a progression of two interpretations of the diaspora as a social phenomenon and thus, I argue, the parallel development of two interpretations of diasporic consciousness. In her essay entitled Beyond Gilroy’s Black Atlantic Christine Chivallon explains that while the classical interpretation of diaspora, resting on criteria set forth by scholars such as Tölöyan, Cohen, Sheffer and Saffron, focuses primarily on what James Clifford calls “centered” diasporic communities whose consciousness is “unified despite the devastating effects of separation” and constituted by shared memory and a “communal source of origin,” a second conception of diaspora has emerged, primarily through the work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. The latter emphasizes diversity of experience over unity and conceives of diasporic communities as deriving their sociality from “movement, interconnection, and mixed references.” Contemporary notions of cultural hybridity play a particularly important role in this expanded theory of diaspora, especially for Hall, who encourages us to consider how the “recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity,” – which is to say, the blending of cultural elements in practice – can constitute a diasporic experience that no longer privileges “essence” or

79 Vertovec. Transnationalism. pg. 7.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid. p. 235.
“purity.” Hall stipulates that new diasporic identities allow the individual and the community to “see and experience itself as ‘Other,’” while more traditional notions of cultural identity privilege a cultural “one true self” that reflects reified cultural and historical experiences.

Such a momentous shift in the interpretation of diasporas and diasporic identity has equally profound ramifications for notions of diasporic consciousness, considering that a collective consciousness might be molded and maintained despite the differences that characterize this second vision of diasporas. In other words, cultural hybridity and multi-local attachments entail a more fluid sense of belonging, not necessarily moored to any single shared experience of separation, exile or oppression. Rather, a “bundle of experiences” constitutes a expanded diasporic consciousness that is no longer, according to Hall, that of “scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return.” Instead, awareness of plurality stimulates a desire to weave together “here” and “there,” to live with and through difference as opposed to sameness. While a more traditional understanding of diasporic consciousness privileges a coherence of identities fixed in a common and often tumultuous history of dispersion, the emergent mode of diasporic consciousness represents an awareness of belonging to an “imaginary coherence” of diverse and malleable cultural identities. I argue that this notion of “de-centered” diasporic consciousness proves particularly helpful when critically approaching the Brazilian diaspora, given its assortment of ethnicities, narratives of immigration and visions of “homeland.”

The distinction between diasporic consciousness and transnational consciousness is slight, but worth noting. Just as diasporas can be understood as paradigmatic transnational communities, diasporic consciousness represents a paradigmatic form of transnational consciousness. The terms are neither mutually exclusive nor are they analogous, and in order to locate the crucial differences between them, the discrepancies

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., p. 225.
85 Ibid., p. 223.
88 Ibid., p. 224.
between diasporas and transnational communities must be briefly revisited. Transnational and diasporic consciousness are related in much the same way that “transnational villages”\textsuperscript{89} are related to larger diasporas: when an awareness of “imaginary coherence” takes hold, including in its scope communities and dispersed individuals beyond the local-to-local connections of a transnational villages, a diasporic consciousness can be said to take shape from within transnational consciousness. Thus, transnational consciousness can be understood, perhaps, as a necessary precursor to the expanded notion of diasporic consciousness explored by scholars like Hall and Gilroy. The distinguishing factor is, as Levitt observes, “[a] fiction of congregation” that expands the boundaries of a transnational community and thus enlarges the scope of belonging. In her ethnography entitled \textit{Flexible Citizenship}, anthropologist Aihwa Ong speaks form transnational consciousness on similar terms, calling attention to individual social actors and communities who demonstrate an awareness of multi-locality without affiliation to an imagined coherences of identities that might qualify as a diaspora. Ong describes, for example, a Hong Kong business elite, who demonstrate a “weakness for foreign passports”\textsuperscript{90}:

\begin{quote}
...Taipans who had been doing business with Beijing openly accumulated foreign passports, claiming they were merely “a matter of convenience,” but in a Freudian slip, one let on that multiple passports were also “a matter of confidence” in uncertain political times…\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

Here, Ong suggests that the multiple passport holder,\textsuperscript{92} a character she returns to frequently in her ethnography as the a paragon of modern transnationalism, benefits from plurality not only in the sense that dual or even tri-citizenship might facilitate more fluid economic endeavors, but also in the sense that this dynamic, adaptive and “flexible” mode of citizenship perhaps translates also into a flexibility and dynamism of consciousness. She calls these characters “flexible subjects” who, in her words, “respond

\textsuperscript{89} Levitt, Peggy. The Transnational Villagers. Berkeley: University of California, 2001, pg. 15.


\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 2.
fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions” and “cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement.”

I assert, as Ong does, that this concept of flexibility might also be used to describe a transnational consciousness, a mode of belonging to multiple cultures and nations without subscribing consciously to the fiction of congregation that characterizes diasporas. Transnationalism, understood as a type of consciousness, represents the fundamental awareness of these multiple attachments and solidarities, and thus “transnationality” can be better understood as being deliberately “here” and “there.” Indeed, the assertion of social science academics such as Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton-Blanc has been that this awareness of being simultaneously “home away from home,” often elicits a pluralizing of cultural identity. Though some immigrants identify more with one society than the other, Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc argue that “the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation.”

The transnational experience involves not only a widening of geographic horizons, but an expansion, reshaping and a conscious reimaging of cultural identity itself. Thus, as an analytic framework, transnationalism can function not only as a means of conceptualizing certain dispersed communities and certain modes of cultural reproduction, but it may also provide the theoretical terms for understanding individuals as consciously belonging to many different nations and cultures at once.

Despite their differences, transnational consciousness and diasporic consciousness are valuable concepts, and terms that I deploy frequently in this ethnography, particularly because both engage and subvert the notion of national borders as rigid boundaries of belonging. Granted that traditional nation-state borders both demarcate the limits of a nation as geographical territory and delineate what is different, foreign and “Other” from what is the same, shared and common, transnational and diasporic consciousness call into question the alleged integrity of “borders” as such. It must be here noted that the flexible forms of consciousness that academics like Ong and Hall attempt to theorize is not meant to discredit the power of shared national and cultural history or collective memory as

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93 Ibid., p. 6.
95 Ibid.
powerful factors in the development and maintenance of transnational and diasporic communities. Rather, they are intended to offer an alternative framework for understanding how dispersed immigrants and immigrant communities imagine themselves as unified with both their fellow migrants and with members of their ancestral homelands. To theorize a transnational consciousness is thus to assert, as Robin Cohen does in his essay entitled “Diasporas and the Nation State: From Victims to Challengers” that “transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by exclusive territorial claims…that a diaspora” or any transnational community “can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination”\textsuperscript{96}. It is this simultaneously paradoxical and empowering notion of “shared imagination” that makes theories of flexible transnational consciousness possible and so pervasive, for they account for the diversity of people and places that must somehow be bound to each other, however loosely, in order to sustain a sense multi-local belonging.

Yet, one cannot properly speak of multi-local or multi-cultural belonging without returning to W.E.B. Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness,” a concept which has come to structure the discourse of both diaspora and transnational studies, particularly with respect to the theorizing of plural consciousness. Bearing witness to the complicated racial antagonism which, he claims, deprives African Americans of a true self-consciousness, Du Bois emphasizes the problematic, if not debilitating, implications of this “two-ness,” of seeing oneself “through the eyes of another” and the dilemma of “[merging this] double self into better and truer self.”\textsuperscript{97} For in this striving for “self-conscious manhood,”\textsuperscript{98} Du Bois witnesses strife and conflict, “two warring ideals in one dark body,”\textsuperscript{99} a struggle for satisfaction at the expense of the subject that unites them. Although Du Bois wrote these critical reflections at the turn of the century, I assert that they can and should be brought to bear on the exploration of contemporary plural identities insofar as they articulate a crucial element of the transnational experience, namely the tension between the categories “self” and “other” that resolves itself through

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., p. 218.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
the experience of transnationality. As Du Bois observes, double consciousness implies a complicated vision of the self, as if seen through “the eyes of another.”\textsuperscript{100} It is precisely this hyphenated vision which Du Bois locates at the heart of the struggle of “two-ness,” for it is being both self and other at once – being seen and seeing through multiple lenses – that produces the “unreconciled striving”\textsuperscript{101} of double consciousness. Though the traumatic memory of slavery and racial oppression may not be shared by all those who experience some form of this bifurcated self-perception, this “second sight”\textsuperscript{102} - which Du Bois also refers to as “a gift”\textsuperscript{103} – may become a source of traumatic antinomy. Thus, when approaching transnationalism as frame of consciousness, particularly with respect to second generation immigrants, one must always consider the possibility of “warring ideals,” of antagonism and trauma as part and parcel of plurality. Indeed, though “two-ness” may often serve as means of subjective empowerment, as evinced by the work of Hall and Gilroy and the ethnographic research conducted by Aihwa Ong, it may be equally responsible for anxieties that deserve the attention of transnational studies. This study therefore attempts to highlight these very anxieties, emphasizing the inherent trouble of transnational consciousness and interrogating the experiences of second generation immigrants as articulations of an ongoing negotiation of “split” selfhood. For it is not only in moments of empowerment that the differences between first and second generation immigrants present themselves, but also in moments of disillusion.

\textit{Performing the Self Here and There: Transnationality as Performance}

If a critical social science discourse is to explore the implications and limits of transnationality, it becomes necessary, nay essential, to consider alternative frameworks for understanding both cultural and national identity. I proceed from the premise that “consciousness” does not completely encompass the category of “identity” and borrow

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 217.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
from theorists such as Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha the notion of identity – both cultural and national – as performative.

In the conclusion of her book Gender Trouble Butler articulates, in a single phrase, the underlying assertion of theories concerning performative identity:

“My argument is that there need not be a doer behind the deed, but that the “doer” is variably constructed in and through the deed.” 104

For Butler, the notion that identity precedes action obfuscates the role of performance – which is to say, of repeated articulations and expressive actions – in the constitution of subjectivity. Performance, she claims, may give “the appearance of a subject as an effect,” but is nevertheless “asserted through a process of signification,” what she elsewhere refers to as “self-making.” Thus, the possibility that the “self” can and does “become a site of contest and revision” allows for a critical reinterpretation of identity that concedes its provisionality but simultaneously suggests the possibility of “play” with the boundaries of subjectivity itself. Butler’s work serves as an important theoretical point of departure for my own analysis of “transnationality” amongst second generation Brazilian immigrants for several reasons. In certain chapters of this ethnography, I explore my informants’ linguistic fluency and the hybrid dialects of English and Portuguese that they employ in everyday conversation, borrowing from Butler’s reading of J.L. Austin’s philosophy of language the notion that speech not only articulates but also constitutes identities.

Austin’s theoretical framework for understanding speech acts as “performative utterances” undergirds Butler’s own assertion that “[the] reiterative power of discourse [can] produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains.” Indeed, Austin asserts in the second lecture in his series of lectures entitled How To Do Things With Words, “to

106 Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. pg. 143.
107 Ibid., pg. 312.
utter [a] sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe [one’s] doing something,” rather, by “saying something [one is] doing something,” and in this sense language does active “work” beyond representational utility. When the “work” that speech acts conduct is understood as performative, which is to say, a process of “self-making,” language and linguistic expression can become the site for critical analysis of the identities they produce. In my own work, I investigate the performative value of language in order to better understand how cultural and national identities, and perhaps transnationality, can be constituted through unique forms of locution that blend multiple systems of diverse linguistic coding. Thus, both Butler and Austin provide a theoretical terminology that serves as a fundamental point of reference for many of my own assertions and I return frequently to their formative texts – particularly Butler’s Gender Trouble – for guidance in the interpretation of my ethnographic data.

However, as Butler moves beyond Austin’s focus on speech, her work calls attention to the power of other discursive practices – those that might not qualify as utterances – to “produce” identities and, in Austin’s theoretical lexicon, “do work.” Text and writing may also serve as modes of “self-making,” a notion that proves particularly helpful for conceptualizing how an individual’s contribution to public and collaborative “texts” such as digital media and social networking websites also entails non-verbal performative gestures and can be explored as imagined spaces wherein identities of are “contested and revised.” I approach social and cultural activity that transpires in cyber-space as another site of possible analysis, focusing specifically on how transnational and diasporic identity and citizenship are constituted through the use of communications technologies and social networking platforms that engender textual dialogue and provide an arena for the textual assertion of individual identity.

Of course, Butler addresses performativity in the context of gender identity, which is to say, she explores gender as an identity category constituted by particularly styled performances with recourse to conventions and ideologies that delimit boundaries of “femininity” and “masculinity.” In order to further ground my exploration of cultural and national identity as performative, I turn primarily to the work of post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, who adopts Butler’s theoretical framework for understanding

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110 Austin, J. L. How to Do Things with Words. pg, 12.
identity as constituted through forms of repeated “signification” – which is to say, speech, and expressive non-verbal action– but applies the critical lens of performativity theory at the level of nation and culture.

The complexity of post-colonial subjectivity represents, for Bhabha, an effect of the performative components of cultural and national identity which, he argues, is never completely determined a priori, but rather takes “takes place”\(^{111}\) in the fluid boundaries of a “nation-space” wherein the “concept of a ‘people’ emerges within a range of discourses.”\(^{112}\) In many ways invoking the work of Butler, he claims that this “nation-space” represents a “signifying system” and thus the categories “nation” and “culture” that often serve to identify individuals as belonging to geographically bound polities and communities built upon fixed, immutable traditions are, for Bhabha, an effect of this signification. Provided that my own ethnographic work focuses on the cultural and national identities of second generation immigrants and attempts to understand their sense of belonging to various nations and cultures as constituted through performance, I engage frequently with a range of various essays and texts in which Bhabha seeks to refine essentialist readings of nationhood and challenges both the internal coherence of “national-cultures”\(^{113}\) and their alleged roles as precursors to a people.

However, Bhabha recognizes, as Butler does, that identity performance of any kind – gender, cultural or national – always unfolds under duress. Both theorists acknowledge the various structures of power and systems of discourse that limit the performance of various identities and thus endeavor to produce certain kinds of gendered, cultured or national subjects. Likewise, I proceed with my own ethnographic analysis with an awareness that “identity” is always, to some degree, managed by the various forms of discourse in which a given individual finds him or herself embedded. However, as Butler emphasizes, the codified knowledge and reified traditions that appear as “rule-bound discourses” only “insert” themselves into “mundane signifying acts of linguistic life.”\(^{114}\) This observation, particularly with respect to my own ethnographic work, is crucial. Butler explores an alternative understanding of individual agency that “opens up

\(^{111}\) Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture. London*: Routledge, 1994, pg. 59.
\(^{112}\) Ibid., 208.
\(^{113}\) Ibid.
\(^{114}\) Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. pg. 145.
possibilities [which are] insidiously foreclosed by positions of that take identity categories as foundational and fixed\textsuperscript{115} without conceding the power of discourse to “[regulate] process[es] of signification”\textsuperscript{116} or “self-making.” In other words, if all signification – which is to say performance – unfolds “under the compulsion to repeat,” then “agency” is situated within “the possibility of a variation on that repetition.”\textsuperscript{117} For Butler, the limits of identity are the limits of performance as variably defined by discursive systems.

Bhabha’s own theoretical stance with respect to the limits placed upon national and cultural identities and the “location” of individual or collective agency within “the nation-space” bears striking resemblance to Butler’s argument. Like Butler, he is careful not to underestimate the power of pedagogical national agendas that manifest as the “narrative constructions” with which a people are in constant negotiation. The “nation-people” are located in an unstable interstitial zone of “occult instability;” in a perpetual intermezzo between their status as "historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy" and as "'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary [national or cultural] presence."\textsuperscript{118} For Bhabha, as for Butler, the process “signification” or “self-making” is always a negotiation suspended between discursive limitations or “pedagogical representations” and “the recursive strategy of the performative,”\textsuperscript{119} between who or what one performs and who or what one is expected to perform in the name of national or cultural “narrative” continuity. Through close analysis of my own ethnographic data, I too endeavor to demonstrate how different cultural, national, and transnational identities are “located” in the unpredictable liminal space between performance and pedagogy, returning primarily to Bhabha’s theoretical lexicon as a point of reference. I ask if and how transnationality can be performed, and with what overlapping and confusing systems of discursive limitation it negotiates. I also critically consider – just as the performativity theory of gender calls for a revision of the term “identity” itself – whether a performative theory of transnationality likewise requires a

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., pg. 147.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., pg. 145.  
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{118} Bhabha. The Location of Culture. pg. 244.  
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., pg. 155.
reassessment of the term “transnationality,” and how such a category of identity is constituted, contested and constrained.

Though Butler and Bhabha both provide a theoretical terminology for better understanding the latter - which is to say, how identity as performance is subject to discursive limitations – I find the work of anthropologist John Jackson particularly helpful in finding adequate common ground between their slightly different vocabularies. Citing philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, Jackson explains that “collective identities” – what Butler might call “identity categories” – “provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories,” which may be, according to Jackson, “corrosively mobilized to make social [cultural, ethnic, national, gender] differences appear absolute and normal.” I assert that the term “script” effectively captures – in its metaphorical association with both speech and text – the systems of discourse, arranged into various narratives and discursive traditions, that both Bhabha and Butler observe in their explorations of performative post-colonial and gender identity respectively. Therefore, I deploy this term – “script” – to more easily navigate between their overlapping, but not altogether analogous, theoretical language. However, Jackson also calls attention to the notion of “authenticity,” a concept which cannot be properly divorced from the function of “scripts,” insofar as it explains “what is most constraining and self-destructive about identity politics.” Indeed, scripts demand particularly styled performances, and thus entails that those performances are “interpreted and analyzed from the outside” or “authenticated.” For Jackson, “authenticity” is the subtext of regulatory regimes and pedagogical knowledges that attempt to erect normalizing identity categories, and thus “authenticity tests” represent the discrete moments when performance of various identities comes under scrutiny: when scripts are read and analyzed. In other words, “authenticity” represents a schema of qualities, characteristics and behaviors to which a given script has recourse and with which various authorities “evaluate” a given individual performing identity. Though

122 Ibid., pg. 12.
123 Ibid., pg. 15.
Jackson engages the notions of “authenticity” and “authenticity tests” in order to demonstrate their dehumanizing effects, I use this terms within my own work to demonstrate how scripts – understood as discursively limited identity categories that demand certain “authentic” performances – signify reading, performance and evaluation. Scripts are interpretable at multiple levels. As such, in my own ethnographic analysis, I ask to what standard or standards of “authenticity” second generation immigrants are held and thus what “scripts” limit their performance of national and cultural identity. I pay particularly close attention to the various discursive representations of “authentic” Brazilian culture and “authentic” Brazilian national identity that permeate the lives of my informants which may, as Bhabha suggests, represent “reified forms of realism and stereotype.” Adherence to or subversion of different scripts of cultural and national “authenticity” may, as I attempt to convey in my work, be contextually advantageous and empowering. Likewise, the limitations that “authenticity” inherently entails – insofar as no system of authenticity allows all styles of performance - may be perceived as oppressive and, as Jackson asserts, “dehumanizing.”

By briefly introducing these alternative frameworks for understanding “identity” as a complex performative negotiation, I wish also to convey my own intentions as an ethnographer and as a writer: I hope to bring interdisciplinary theory to bear on my own ethnographic work and thus to demonstrate the potential of a more creative, cooperative mode of critical thinking within the domain of transnational studies. Thus, this section not only serves to establish the various theoretical premises upon which my own exploration of “transnationality” is grounded, but also to illustrate the advantages of free-play between a variety of intellectual discourses and how the social sciences might prosper by borrowing from cultural and queer theory an approach to identity that focuses on performativity. New areas of study and scholarship may, in fact, emerge through this kind of cooperation, insofar as theories of performative identity constitution may help transnational studies come to terms with what is “new” in the second generation immigrant experience. Indeed, the second generation may navigate the antimonies of pedagogy and performance, of scripts and authenticity, differently from their parents, differences that I seek to bring to the fore.

124 Ibid., p. 152.
Chapter II
Parallel Lives

Having established the particular modalities and morphologies of transnationalism and transnationality which I employ and hope to explore in this ethnography, I find it appropriate to briefly introduce the four young Brazilian-Americans who contributed to my work, for their willingness to share with me the details of their lives – pleasant and unpleasant, trivial and profound – has made my research possible and fruitful. This section provides brief sketches of each informant and the circumstances of our original acquaintance. They are reproduced from notes and recordings taken during our first interviews and represent, for the most part, my first impressions as an ethnographer. In each portrait I attempt to highlight important details including, but not limited to, the circumstances of my informants’ birth and upbringing, the frequency of their travel to and from Brazil, their relative fluencies in Portuguese and their engagement in social and cultural activities that transpire – symbolically and actually – across borders. My hope is to both colorfully and honestly represent each of my informants as well as to prepare the reader for the particular themes that guide analysis in subsequent chapters. These are the lives which, for a period of ten months, ran parallel to mine.

Brazilian – American. In that order.
Amanda Souza (17)

By the end of the afternoon, my shirt was nearly soaked through with sweat and I hadn’t succeeded in finding a single second generation Brazilian willing to discuss even the possibility of contributing to my research. In late August, the Paroquia Santo Antonio, an Evangelical Brazilian Catholic Church in Alston Brighton, Massachusetts, has an annual fundraiser which, my father insisted, would be “packed” with young brasileiros. A prime location to begin my research: the parking lot behind Church, in the shadow of
its steeple. As it turns out, my father had embellished the popularity of the event amongst the younger members of the Paroquia’s congregation, and the young Brazilian-Americans who were in attendance seemed, for the most part, unwilling to sacrifice their Saturday afternoons – precious moments of summer vacation – to hear me explain why I was standing in the sun, sweating profusely, with a small sign that read: *Are You A Second Generation Brazilian?* Just as I began to consider conceding defeat, Amanda approached me and said emphatically, “I am a second generation Brazilian.” Despite the summer heat, she wore jeans with holes at the knees and a red hooded sweatshirt with a faded swoosh printed on the breast where a Nike logo had once been. Her bangs covered nearly half of her face, and a pair of thick blue glasses further obscured her visage. Astonished to have been met with such forthright interest, I began to gush, taking deep breaths between my sentences, in order to describe, as quickly as I could, the outline of my thesis project. Just a few words into my pitch and already I could sense her attention slipping. Already I could feel her drifting back into the crowd of other Brazilians, mingling and chatting in the warmth of the afternoon sun. But, convinced to end the day on a note of success, determined to have ruined my shirt, now completely saturated with sweat, for a good cause, I quickly produced a pen and taking Amanda’s hand, wrote my phone number and email address on her palm. She laughed as I scribbled across her skin and said, before disappearing, “Yeah, maybe I’ll call you.”

Amanda did call. Several days after this first encounter, we spoke briefly over the telephone and she suggested that we meet at the Paroquia for her first interview that same day. Caught somewhat off guard by this request, I hastily gathered my things – wallet, recorder, notebook, pen – and noticing no car in the driveway – my mother had gone for a drive – I biked the five or so miles to the Paroquia, arriving just as drenched with sweat as I had left a few days before. Amanda was waiting in the parking lot, her arms crossed over her chest, tapping her foot impatiently on the concrete. Winded from the sprint across town, I apologized breathlessly for my tardiness and she, judging my apology to be sincere and perhaps feeling some sympathy for my state of clammy exhaustion, guided me into the musty basement under the chapel of the Paroquia Santo Antonio. There, we dragged a wobbly card table out from the corner closet, flipped open a set of folding

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125 Personal Recollection
As we spoke, she brushed the hair away from her eyes with long painted fingernails and blew the strands of her bangs upwards and away from her face with a quick puffs of breath. At such moments, when her cool brown eyes came into view, I frequently found myself tilting my head slightly and staring intensely, so as to get a better look at my interlocutor before the strands of auburn hair fell delicately back down. Because her countenance was so often hidden, I had much difficulty, at least in our preliminary interviews, discerning her mood, and so relied almost exclusively on the tone of her voice to deduce her temperament. She sounded bored, for the most part, but seemed inclined, once we had slogged through a series of mundane introductions and technicalities, to recount episodes of her personal history.

Amana explained, “first and foremost,” that she is a *active* member of the Paroquia Santo Antonio and that the church has strong institutional connections to the municipality of Governador Valadares, a city in the southeastern Brazilian state called Minas Gerais, wherefrom both of her parents immigrated to Boston in the late 80’s. For a period of nearly four years, Amanda has cooperated with other young Brazilian-Americans in funding and organizing the church’s Youth Ministry group, a small fraction of a larger congregation, the majority of whom also immigrated from or have extended family ties to Valadares. As such, Amanda is often surrounded by other Brazilians, whose lives intersect at the Paroquia and for whom the church serves as an important link to their home city and a locus of social activity. Likewise, for Amanda, who lives only a few blocks away from the church, the community that gathers at the Paroquia serves as an important focal point in her social life and keeps her intimately tethered to a social network which is itself mapped *across* national boundaries. Indeed, Amanda lives in what Peggy Levitt calls a “transnational village,” a trans-border community constituted flexibly, often by institutions and organizations that act across national boundaries, and endure namely through social remittances. The Paroquia serves as one such institution, linking its congregation – Amanda’s family and closest friends – to social lives in a city thousands of miles south of Boston.

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126 Personal Communication
Unlike many of the other “transnational villagers” who convene every Sunday morning in the Paroquia’s chapel halls, Amanda did not immigrate to the United States. Nevertheless, she feels strongly attached to Governador Valadares and explained, as again she brushed the hair away from her face, that “[she feels] just as connected to a life over there [she does] over here.” Levitt observes that “nonmigrants,” in transnational villages “also adapt many of the values and practices of their migrant counterparts,”127 perhaps explaining why Amanda, who never “migrated,” remains thoroughly embedded in circuit of transnational exchange and social activity that extends from Alston Brighton through Governador Valadares despite her birthright U.S. citizenship and permanent residence in Boston. In fact, Amanda considers herself a Brazilian first and an American second, despite her birth and upbringing in the United States, and made one thing explicit as we began the interview: "I’m a Brazilian-American, in that order."128 Perhaps her emphasis on this “order” to some degree reflects the nature of transnational villages themselves, which, Levitt argues, endeavor to emulate of distant social structure and reproduce the setting of their home cities in their new homes abroad. Indeed, in her study of Dominican migrants from Miraflores living in Jamaica Plain Massachusetts, a neighborhood not far from the Paroquia, Levitt points out that “Mirafloreños have re-created their pre-migration lives to the extent that their new physical and cultural environment allows.”129 A similar social phenomenon is arguably at work in Alston Brighton. In fact, Amanda commented that the few times her grandparents have visited her neighborhood, they were astounded, and equally confused, by the flourishing Brazilian community that bears such resemblance to their home in Governador Valadares. “They were like, ‘Woe! Hold up!’ Is this Brazil?”130 Amanda later explained that leaders of the Paroquia, young and old, attempt to establish a strong sense of community based on common place attachment to Governador Valadares through a variety of activities, including the fundraiser where Amanda and I first met. Donations gathered that afternoon were to be spent on sending several members of the Youth Ministry to a sister congregation in Valadares for an outreach project. Thus, the

127 Levitt, Peggy. The Transnational Villagers. pg. 11-12.
128 Personal Communication
129 Levitt, Peggy. The Transnational Villagers. pg. 11-12.
130 Personal Communication
community that gathers at Paroquia Santo Antonio and lives in the surrounding neighborhoods attempt, at least in theory, to approximate the social and kinship structures that exist in Valadares using the church itself and faith based organization as an anchor. Amanda’s experience of the United States may therefore be highly inflected by the symbolic presence of this distant metropolis and, like her parents, her national and cultural solidarity seems to fall primarily with Brazil and Governador Valadares, their home city. Nevertheless, the term “home” is an inherently slippery concept for Amanda, particularly because she travels frequently between Valadares and Boston. Though her upcoming departure for university may make trips to regular Valadares more difficult, she explained that, since her birth, she has been “back and forth from Valadares to Boston so many times [she] can’t even count.”

These trips seem to be a source of great catharsis for Amanda, who claimed that the ambiguous status of “home” in her geographical imaginary is more or less reconciled by the frequency of her travel between Alston Brighton and Governador Valadares:

Where is “home?” Ummm….Well I don’t know really. I mean, it’s either here or Valadares. One of those two. But I think it’s different for me, you know? I mean, I think they are both my homes. And they’re kinda both not. I guess because I travel there so much I never really feel like I get I chance to, like, “settle down.” I mean, I definitely spend more time here. But sometimes it doesn’t feel like it.\textsuperscript{131}

I proceeded to ask Amanda if her constant globetrotting is ever cause for anxiety or confusion. She paused for quite some time before responding:

Confusing? Yeah. Like, there are a lot of Brazilians here, but its definitely not the same as it is over there. So sometimes, when I’m here, I have to remember that, like, I’m not there. And then sometimes when I’m over there, I have to remember, like… ‘Wait, stop speaking English! You’re in Valadares!’ And sometimes travel

\textsuperscript{131} Personal Communication
does make me feel like here is really, really far from there. But I don’t think it makes me…what was it? Anxious.\textsuperscript{132}

Travel. This appears to be a fundamental element of social life for Amanda; and, though perpetually trekking back and forth between distant locales can be “confusing,” Amanda always “loves going home,” wherever that may be. Amanda’s dual citizenship makes this process of pivoting between different homes more fluid\textsuperscript{133}; however, Amanda explores her connection to Valadares in more ways than one. Levitt acknowledges that “dual citizenship is one way to be a transnational actor,”\textsuperscript{134} allowing for a “new cartography of social experience,”\textsuperscript{135} but Amanda also engages in significant online social activity, using the Internet as a means of interfacing with Brazilians from her parents’ home city and with other brasileiros and brasileiras spread across the globe. Despite the strong connections between specific locales that characterizes social life in transnational villages, these linkages do not seem to have total monopoly over Amanda’s transnational experience. She seemed very aware, particularly when we spoke of her interest in social networking, of belonging to a community of Brazilians outside of the transnational circuit that links Governador Valadares and Alston Brighton. She explained enthusiastically, that she feels connected to a larger “Brazil,” spreading her arms to emphasize the breadth of this gesture of solidarity, one that may not necessarily be localized to Brazil:

When I’m online I feel like I can be in touch with, like, Brazilians who aren’t from Valadares, you know? I mean I only ever travel to Valadares so it’s really the only part of Brazil that I know…It’s really the only part of Brazil that I can call my home.

Though Amanda has grown up in what Levitt calls a transnational village, this does not mean that she, like other members, identifies only with Governador Valadares. Her sense of belonging to a more abstract community of dispersed Brazilians might even

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] Personal Communication
\item[133] Personal Recollection
\item[134] Levitt, Peggy. \textit{The Transnational Villagers}. pg. 12.
\item[135] \textit{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
be considered diasporic. Thus, to assume that Amanda’s mode of transnational engagement is analogous to that first generation migrants from Governador Valadares – many of whom, Amanda explained, are “crazy proud of being from [there]” – would be to overlook critical aspects of her second generation experience which articulate a unique relationship not only with her parents’ home city but also with their homeland more broadly, as well as the distinct practices which shape that relationship, namely her internet activity. Nevertheless, Amanda’s lifelong embeddedness in a transnational village should not be completely discredited as a powerful factor in logic and scope of her multi-local belonging, given that values such as bounded solidarity and enforceable trust – values that permeate transnational communities and implicate their members in both sending and receiving countries – remain influential despite Amanda’s second generation status and regardless of the extent or mode of her own transnational practice. The persistence of these values in Amanda’s social life is perhaps best articulated by the uncertain terms and implications of her graduation from high school and admission to university.

Having been raised in a formidable Brazilian immigrant community and given her habituation to its insularity, Amanda faces a troublesome dilemma as she prepares to depart for her first year of college in Vermont. Her familiarity with international travel notwithstanding, within the United States Amanda has never before travelled further than the boundaries of Massachusetts; moreover, Vermont’s Latino community represents a miniscule percentage of the state’s total population,\(^\text{136}\) of which fewer still are Brazilians, making the state further removed demographically from Massachusetts than any community Amanda has yet encountered. “Do they even have Brazilians in Vermont?” Amanda asked rhetorically as we discussed her upcoming departure for a state she later referred to as “super white,” divulging what seemed to be trepidation, cloaked in sarcasm. Indeed, social distance and ethnic difference of this kind are bad omens for Amanda, who is not altogether unfamiliar with the implications of such a drastic change in social and cultural topography. At age thirteen, Amanda graduated from her public elementary and,

\(^{136}\) According to the US Census Bureau, Latino’s account for 6.6% of the total population of the State of Vermont.

at the insistence of her parents, transferred out of the Greater Boston public school system into a private institution whose racial and socio-economic composition was dominated by children of white, upper middle class families. As a result of this transition, Amanda feels as though many of her most important friendships, the vast majority of which began and flourished in and around the Paroquia Santo Antonio and its Youth Ministry, began to decompose, perhaps due to her frequent absence from gatherings, group events and social occasions with kinfolk and friends, or perhaps because of her “changing attitude,”

provoked by increased proximity to a large population of non-Brazilians. As the sun dipped below the skyline and the dusty basement of the Paroquia began to grow dim, Amanda stood up to flick on the overhead lights and began to explain, as she walked quickly to the opposite wall of the room, how incredibly unsettling this transition had been.

I dunno. I guess I just felt like an outsider all of a sudden. Like I came home and it felt weird. Like everybody was looking at me funny. Maybe I was just paranoid. No. A lot of my friends, like, straight up shunned me. So it definitely changed the way I was treated here. It was hard, though. Because I had to be in both places, you know? I couldn’t really choose one or the other, but that’s kinda what it felt like people were asking me to do.

Thus, the distance between Amanda and her transnational village precipitated a period of what she perceived to be social ostracism, and perhaps her perception of exclusion demonstrates the strength of solidarity that holds transnational villages together and illustrates the importance of local participation in transnational social life. Indeed, the transition, she told me, not only weakened her connection to the transnational Brazilian community in Alston Brighton but had also changed the terms of her engagement with family and friends abroad. Although the “worst part” of this predicament was “feeling

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137 Personal Communication
138 Here, Amanda is referring to her private school and Alston Brighton as two places governed by different cultural logics.
139 Personal Communication
like a stranger to [her] parents and losing [her] place in the Youth Ministry,” Amanda explained that her visits to Governador Valadares were not immune to the significant changes to her social life at home.

It wasn’t so much that my family in Valadares had disowned me or anything, but I felt like I didn’t belong there anymore. Like I couldn’t take off my shoes. I felt more like a guest than family. And I felt more like an American than I ever did before. I guess people just hear about stuff that happens here through the grapevine. So I think my friends and maybe even my grandparents thought, like, “Oh. Here comes the ‘gringa’,” You know? That made me feel like I wasn’t really Brazilian. It was kinda scary.

Again, Amanda’s commentary seems to articulate the bounded solidarity that anchors transnational communities and how these values can serve to limit acceptable social activity as well as to facilitate strong trans-border social ties. Moreover, she suggests that certain standards of cultural “authenticity” operate within transnational communities; standards that can likewise disqualify certain individuals for “real” membership and active participation. However, the most acute effects of her transition to private school came from her decreased fluency in Portuguese, which not only impeded her ability to effectively communicate with friends and family in both Alston Brighton and Governador Valadares, but also jeopardized her sense of belonging to the transnational Brazilian community that weaves together these disparate locales. As the topic of our conversation shifted towards these linguistic difficulties, an uncomfortable grimace flashed momentarily across her face.

It was, like, the straw that broke the…what’s the animal? The camel’s back. When I started stuttering and forgetting words in Portuguese everyone knew something was up. I just couldn’t speak Portuguese the way I used to, and I felt so

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140 Personal Communication. Amanda clarified that she did not lose any official title or role as a leader in the Youth Ministry due to her less frequent attendance of meetings, fundraisers and other various functions. Rather, she felt as though her cohort no longer respected her advice nor requested her presence as one of the group’s senior members.

141 Personal Communication.
embarrassed with my friends and my parents. Plus, my friends and I talk in like this half-and-half language kinda. We call it...Never mind. It’s kind of an embarrassing name. Well...whatever. We call it Porglish. And I couldn’t even speak that. So I felt weird with my friends. We used to be so close. It was like I didn’t spend my life around all those people. It was like they didn’t know who I was.  

Interestingly, Amanda fluency in Portuguese seems to qualify her for social inclusion in a smaller, more exclusive group of second generation Brazilian-Americans within a transnational village, and her exclusion from this particular social group seems to have been the definitive moment of her uncomfortable transition to private education.

Eventually, Amanda decided to return to a public high school closer to Alston Brighton and to the Paroquia, and with this homecoming came both her reintegration into the Brazilian immigrant community from which she had felt ostracized, and an intensification of her connection to Governador Valadares which, she claims, had seemed less accessible to her since her move to private school. As result of this tumultuous experience, Amanda’s approaching departure for university is a source of constant personal tension, as this looming transition bears undeniable resemblance to the one which wrought such profound discontent four years ago. Convinced that her proximity to the Paroquia Santo Antonio and her fluency in Portuguese play important, if not paramount, roles in the extent of her membership to the kinship network that links Alston Brighton and Valadares, Amanda finds herself anxious at the notion of spending four years “out of the loop.”

**Things to Do, People to Meet**

*Tiabe Mallenberg (18)*

Tiabe and I both found ourselves collapsed and recuperating, having overeaten, at a Dia da Independência celebration in Cambridge on the seventh of September. Reclining

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in a set of foldable lawn chairs, a safe distance from the riotous crowds, we watched our jubilant Brazilian cohort, spilling beer and fejoiada on each other as they danced wildly to sertaneja hits. For a while, we looked on together in silence. Bored and uncomfortably full, I tapped my fingernails across the arm of my chair to pass the time and he shook the ice at the bottom of his empty plastic cup, matching the tempo of the band. As I began to dose, Tiabe turned to me and, pointing lethargically to the stage, asked, “Do you like this music?” His playful grin led me to believe that he did not. Turning towards stage briefly, as if to give the sertaneja – a Brazilian musical sensation often likened to American “country music” – another chance, I began to chuckle softly and, finally looking back over at Tiabe, replied, “No. Not particularly.” Surprised to have been met with such a jocular response, he cackled and threw his head backwards. His chair tilted, standing momentarily on two legs before Tiabe snapped himself and the chair back towards my own. He shifted his weight forward again and extended his hand.

This is how I met Tiabe, the American born son of a German from Göttingen and Brazilian from Rio de Janeiro, and four years my junior, having begun his freshman year at Northeastern University in Boston the week before. Our first encounter was short lived, however, for we both returned to our respective universities later that afternoon, and although he seemed genuinely intrigued by my project outline, which I tried my best to explain over the clamor of the Independence Day celebration, he was apprehensive to schedule an interview and waited several weeks before replying to my request. And thus I found myself waiting for Tiabe at a café in Downtown Boston nearly two months after we had first met, closely inspecting each person who strolled by my table, unable to remember clearly Tiabe’s face or build, and worried that he might have already wandered by unbeknownst to me. It was ultimately his chic tortoise shell glasses and the way he fiddled incessantly with their frames that jogged my memory, as I saw him suddenly crystallize across the café terrace doing just that: fingering the temple piece of his spectacles and nervously checking his watch. I waved and motioned for him to join me at the table. “Phew,” he pushed the bridge of the glasses in towards his brow and furrowed his nose to keep them in place, “I thought for a moment that I was late.”

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apologized promptly for his delayed response to my request that he participate in my research and explained that his initial apprehension had more to do with the manic pace of college life than any aversion to the project itself. “It’s not that I didn’t want to help you out, André,” he seemed to think that he needed an excuse, unaware of my satisfaction that he had taken an interest in my work in the first place, “It’s just that I’ve been so busy. And even when I’m not busy, I still feel busy.” I assured him that his concern was appreciated, though needless, for I understood his circumstances well, remembering my own first semester at university with a funny mixture of nostalgia and the feeling of deliverance. “Well then,” he unwrapped the scarf he had around his neck, “let’s get down to business.”

Though Tiabe was born in the United States, his parents’ unpredictable professional lives soon demanded that they relocate to Rio de Janeiro, where Tiabe attended an international primary school until age ten, living with his maternal grandparents while his mother and father traveled. As such, Tiabe became accustomed to travel and to a conditional lifestyle at a very young age, not only because his parents insisted that their residency in Rio would only be temporary, but also because his elementary school cohort, whose families had similarly nomadic inclinations, became increasingly ephemeral characters and his friendships increasingly short-lived. “I always knew that ‘home’ wasn’t ever going to be an easy thing,” Tiabe explained as passersby stole intrigued glances at our table, where a pre-historic-looking recording device stood, its microphone pointed into Tiabe’s face. I had broken my own, sleeker, digital recording equipment on the train-ride up to Boston, and my mother had lent me the one she had used during her fieldwork in Mozambique.

I guess because all my friends were always up and leaving, I felt like Rio couldn’t really be home. And my parents were, like, never there, so I always felt this feeling that we would be leaving. I didn’t mind that though. I think its actually

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helped me in the whole process of going to college. I’ve always been kind of…well…I dunno. A guest, I guess.\textsuperscript{149}

Indeed, his habituation to the prospect of change would prove a valuable asset, as his family’s subsequent relocation to Danbury Connecticut, his current place of residence, would come at a moment when his awareness of place and attachment to Brazil was far more acute then it had been during their original move to Rio. Thus, after Tiabe’s fourth year of primary education, his parents once again determined to pursue their careers elsewhere, the Mallenberg family gathered their belongings and set off from Rio, from the only notion of “home,” albeit a fleeting one, Tiabe had ever known. Yet, finding himself once more uprooted, once more faced with the challenge of adapting to the uncertain circumstances of his family’s itinerant lifestyle, Tiabe “thrived.”\textsuperscript{150} Leaning forward to speak into the microphone, Tiabe reflected on the formative experience of relocation at such a young age:

Yeah, I think I kinda thrived. I definitely feel like I am the person that I am today because of that move. I mean, I got used to travel especially. I remember looking out the window of the airplane on our way to the States and feeling so excited. I wasn’t even afraid of being so high up, but I guess I had been on planes before. I think that move also taught me that, like, there are interesting people everywhere, you know? Everyone has their own thing going on. Different cultures and languages and stuff. I think I got hooked on that idea because we moved around when I was little. But I think it also has to do with how often I go back.\textsuperscript{151}

Tiabe and his parents “go back” quite a bit. Several times a year, Tiabe’s mother returns to Rio to visit her own parents and he often accompanies her. “I love going home,” he said smiling, his teeth nearly touching the metal cage around the microphone, “I get to see all my friends and all the family that still lives over there.” Though they may not live in what Levitt calls a “transnational village” – although Tiabe informs me that

\textsuperscript{149} Personal Communication  
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Danbury has a substantial Brazilian immigrant community – his parents arguably engage in transnational practices that include, but are not limited to, sending and receiving money and gifts to and from relatives abroad, sharing and discussing current events, and organizing visits for family members on the other side of the international divide.\textsuperscript{152}

Perhaps his parents’ transnational lifestyle, coupled with his “childhood [lived] between homes,”\textsuperscript{153} has intensified Tiabe’s appetite for travel, for languages and, above all, for change. He explained that exposure to children of similarly “international families”\textsuperscript{154} during his sojourn in Rio – many of whom shared Tiabe’s appetite for the unfamiliar - served to habituate him to a social life spread across many nations, enveloping many institutions and weaving together many languages.

His comments during our first interview always seemed to organize themselves around this marked enthusiasm for the exploration of cultural difference, particularly through languages. Indeed, Tiabe not only speaks relatively fluent Portuguese – a Portuguese that “comes and goes”\textsuperscript{155} depending on the frequency of his visits to Rio – but has studied French, Italian and currently studies Japanese at Northeastern University. He also “flirts”\textsuperscript{156} with German, his father’s native language. However, Tiabe articulates very little, if any, anxiety with regards to the perpetual fluctuation of his fluency in Portuguese and does not associate its receding with any significant deterioration of his ties to Brazil; rather, when such a slump occurs, he simply considers himself “out of practice.”\textsuperscript{157}

What do you expect? I mean, I think I have to cut myself a little bit of slack. I spend much more time here than I do in Brazil, so obviously I’m going to end up speaking more English than Portuguese, even if Portuguese \textit{was} my first language. But still, I think I’m more interested I learning other languages, than, like, \textit{perfecting} my Portuguese. And I don’t think that people over there think any

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less of me because of that. And if they do...I don’t really care that much.

[Laughs]¹⁵⁸

His attitude towards language and linguistic fluency is strikingly confident. Unlike Amanda, who perceives her own membership to Brazilian communities, home and abroad, as determined, to some extent, by her linguistic aptitude, Tiabe appears more flexible and less concerned with preserving his fluency in Portuguese, particularly if that entails sacrificing his interest in expanding his linguistic horizons. This sort of versatility, according to Tiabe, is “necessary if you want to travel, if you want to see the world outside of your neighborhood or city,” and travel, it seems, is of paramount importance for Tiabe. Although he has only just begun a four year undergraduate program, Tiabe dreams of “exploring the world and all its people”¹⁵⁹, of further mapping his life across nations.

I can’t wait to be able to travel. I feel like its what I was meant to do. I guess now I’m just…biding my time. I like to think that this will be the last time I’m in one place for a long period of time. I’ve got places to go and people to meet! [Laughs] But seriously, I think its important to travel. At least, its important to me. I mean, don’t you agree? Don’t we have, like, responsibility to know about other cultures and places? We, of all people, should know how important that it.¹⁶⁰

I was surprised to hear Tiabe refer so causally to the two of us as “we,” I although I was unsure whether this was a demonstration of solidarity grounded by our mutual Brazilian heritage or whether he was simply speaking to me as a fellow young adult. Whatever the case may be, Tiabe seems utterly devoted to, perhaps even transfixed by, cultural exploration and travel, not only as a means of personal satisfaction but also as “responsibility.” His dedication to peregrination notwithstanding, Tiabe is no less engaged with an extensive network of first and second generation Brazilians, including relatives in and around Rio de Janeiro, the families of his primary school classmates, and

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other Brazilian immigrants in Connecticut with whom his parents frequently interface. Nor does Tiabe perceive his appetite for travel, for foreign language immersion and, above all, for the “unfamiliar”\textsuperscript{161} to be incompatible with sustained emotional connection to Brazilian culture. “I still love Rio,” he explained with a smile, fooling with the rims of his glasses, “but that’s just one of many places that are important to me. Like, Danbury is important to me too, and now Boston.” He removed his glasses, breathed over their lenses, and wiped them clean with the sleeve of his shirt. “There will be other places too. I mean, I’ll go other places. So why get too attached?” Given this intriguing disinclination to particular place attachments, I decided to ask Tiabe with which nation – Brazil or the United States – his solidarities fell. “Solidarity?” he responded, his tone suddenly vehement, even offended, “I hate that word so… Neither.” How different from Amanda he seemed in this first interview. Tiabe does not feel obligated to sustain intense communication or engagement with either Brazil or United States, nor does he perceive such dire social consequences of his non-participation in the transnational practices that his parents, for example, actively pursue. He finds such activities rewarding certainly, but never necessary. Rather, Tiabe explains that he can “jump in and out”\textsuperscript{162} of this transnational circuit whenever he likes and does not worry, as Amanda does, that his absence will jeopardize his membership or “authentic” belonging to the communities it weaves together. In fact, Tiabe seems averse to the term “authenticity” and what he considers to be its exclusionary implications:

When I think of authenticity I think of things like food and music, not people. Yeah, I can act more Brazilian sometimes, like when I hang out with my Brazilian friends. But I don’t think that makes me more authentic.\textsuperscript{163}

Indeed, this notion of authenticity, perhaps one that Amanda subscribes to more fully, is incompatible with Tiabe’s hopes of cultural exploration.

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I enjoy the company of other Brazilians, sure. But that’s not everything to me. If it was, I think I would feel trapped. And if I felt like being away from other Brazilians and from my parents and from Rio…

He paused, thinking quietly and collecting himself before finishing his thought,

…if being with other people, from other countries, who speak other languages meant that I was giving up ‘being’ Brazilian or some kind of authenticity or something, well… then I’d give it up.

**Along for the Ride**  
*Beatrice Cordoba (22)*

A friend of my father's first put me in contact with his daughter, Beatrice, during the summer before her final year of study at Boston University. Of the many young Brazilians that I had approached, hoping that some might be interested in contributing to my research, Beatrice was certainly the most enthusiastic. As a fellow social science major, she seemed to appreciate the methodological scope of my project, intrigued by ethnographic research, insisting that the few anthropological texts she had encountered during her introductory coursework she had found fascinating. “Like a breath of fresh air.” She described her brief foray into the craft of ethnography as uplifting and remarked that she would like to read more. More striking, however, than her apparently genuine interest in the disciplinary foundations of my research, was Beatrice’s willingness to speak candidly about herself and her experience as a second generation Brazilian, even during our first formal interview in late October. On a particularly frigid morning, she took the subway from her downtown dormitory to the southern edge of Boston proper to meet me for coffee, though I had not anticipated how completely saturated with late-morning commuters and early lunch-break loungers almost every café

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would be. In fact, no matter how far we strolled, peeking ours heads in through the front
doors of each coffee shop and every bakery in our path, we could not find I tranquil place
to sit and talk, let alone a place to sit at all. Embarrassed to have woken Beatrice at such
an early hour, on a the first uncomfortably cold day of fall, to meet me for what had
degenerated into a fruitless search for quiet and coffee, I turned to my comrade-in-
vagrancy to apologize, expecting, with great anxiety, her utmost disappointment. Instead,
I was met with a most unexpected vision of ease, a smile so lively that I felt, at first, that
she must be mocking my clear frustration. But her grin soon gave me to know I had
nothing to fret. Beatrice was, as she later explained, “along for the ride.”

Having found our way back to the subway station from which we originally set
out, we decided – I begrudgingly and she with uncanny enthusiasm – to return to a small
café one block south, the first in the long series of places we had visited on our
impromptu jaunt through town. Still, no booths were vacant inside, and just as I was
about to surrender to my vexation, Beatrice, sensing my discontent, placed her hand on
my shoulder and suggested that we sit outside. For the sake of my research and our
fading energy, I agreed. Surely relieved to finally enjoy a coffee (albeit at frigid
temperatures), Beatrice slipped on her white mittens and winter cap and quickly found a
table just outside the front door of the café, strategically chosen, she explained proudly,
so that every time another customer entered or left the building a blast of warm air would
provide us with momentary relief from the bitter, October chill. We had shared each
other’s company for nearly an hour; and yet, I still knew fairly little about Beatrice and
less still about her experience as a second generation Brazilian. We had made
conversation during our stroll, but it wasn’t until we were seated – she sipping from a
small cup of cocoa and I guzzling a monstrous mug of black coffee – that we became
truly acquainted, not so much as fellow people, but as fellow Brazilian-Americans.

Beatrice's parents met in Minas Gerais, Brazil and immigrated together to the
United States, stopping briefly in Washington DC for several years before finally settling
in Watertown, Massachusetts, where Beatrice and her siblings were born. Her father’s
indomitable entrepreneurial spirit and several fruitful business ventures provided

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Beatrice's family with the financial mobility to afford frequent trips in Minas Gerais. These trips are so frequent, in fact, that Beatrice has seldom gone more than four months without paying a visit, however brief, to family and friends in and around Minas, although her commitment to a university education has made these trips more difficult in recent years. Nevertheless, Beatrice remains in close contact with relatives abroad and sustains these connections by whatever means she finds necessary, namely through social networking websites:

Now that I’m in school. I talk to people in Minas mainly through Skype. But I also use Facebook and Orkut too. I mean, my grandparents don’t know how to use that stuff, but a lot of my friends are online, like, all the time. So it’s pretty easy to stay in touch with people. I read something recently about how Brazil has, like, one of the highest internet activity rates in the world. Crazy, right? I guess I’m a part of that though.169

Though she conceded that most of her communication with relatives and friends abroad unfolds over the Internet, Beatrice described her relationship to her parents' country of origin as a "love affair"170 that never ceases to excite her. Beatrice seemed confidant not only that her connections to Minas had survived the first three years of university relatively intact, but that she would not find it particularly difficult to maintain contact with her “home away from home”171 after graduating and after taking another significant step towards financial and social autonomy from her parents. This is not to say that Beatrice is completely at ease in this negotiation of the trans-boarder kinship and friendship networks that link Watertown and Minas; in fact, she calls this sort of negotiation “a juggling act,” a metaphor that signifies a degree of anxiety. The terms of her continued connection to Minas Gerais are uncertain, especially now, as she prepares to graduate from Boston University; yet, she refuses to prematurely eulogize her ties with Brazil. She has not yet given up the possibility of felicitous continuity of connection, perhaps through social networking, nor ruled out the alternative: that the nature of her

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relationship with Minas Gerais will have to change, for better or for worse. “I’m a present oriented person,” she explained, “I don’t like to worry too much about what’s coming. If my relationship with people in Brazil needs to change, I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it.” With respect to her involvement and engagement in social lives in both Brazil and the United States, she prefers to stay situated in “the here and now.”

In stark contrast to Amanda, who nervously anticipates her departure for college, Beatrice approaches her departure from college, and the imminent life course changes that will mostly likely follow, with a cool confidence. Or, perhaps, ambivalence. “I understand that things might have to change,” she explained, seemingly without a modicum of melancholia, “I mean, I know that I’ll probably travel less to Brazil, but I don’t worry that my connection to Minas Gerais and all my family there will wither away or anything. That’s silly.” She attributes this ambivalence to the uncertain terms of her childhood. For a time, her father’s business endeavors in the United States were unpredictable and largely unsuccessful, making the Cordoba family’s return to Minas Gerais a looming possibility. Though his dealings eventually “paid off,” and though Beatrice spent the majority of her youth with the means to travel to and from Minas with relative ease, she claims that the period of financial instability makes her better prepared for the prospects of post-graduate life, particularly with respect the possibility of reduced contact with “folks back in Minas.”

It has to be that way. I mean, when my father was building his business here [in Watertown] I didn’t really know if I was staying or going. And whether or not I wanted to stay or go didn’t really matter because I had to go where my parents went, you know? I was still under their wing. So I know what it feels like to be moving around. Or, at least, thinking you might have to move around. So I’m totally cool, you know? I’m ready to graduate. Yeah, I think I’m definitely ready.

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I pressed Amanda further, asking whether she felt as though “folks in Minas” perceive her differently because she visits Brazil less frequently since entering university, and whether she felt that their perceptions might change if post-graduate life proved too busy or complicated to afford trips home. She seemed confused by the question itself, and responded after a long silence, “Like, do you mean, do I think they might forget about me? Or, like, not accept me?” Taking a gulp of my coffee, I nodded my head, indicating that I was suggesting the latter. She immediately laughed, spraying hot cocoa and tiny marshmallows across table. As she apologized, reaching for a napkin to clean up the mess, she explained her extreme reaction to my question with a slight tone:

*Look.* I don’t really worry about that kind of stuff. I have a lot of other friends who are second generation immigrants too, and some of them talk about how they are nervous about going home – I mean, like, back to where their parents are from – they get scared that it will be different, or something. Honestly, I don’t get it. Maybe I just don’t care as much, but *seriously*? I mean, my dad left Brazil for, like, ten whole years. All he did was call. But now he goes back all the time and it’s not any different. I know it’s different for me, cause I wasn’t *born* there. But still. Let’s be real. Brazil’s always going be there.¹⁷⁶

Of course, Beatrice does not experience the same institutionally complete social network manifest in Amanda’s transnational village, and thus the social obligations and boundaries associated with the transnational social field that Beatrice occupies may be less intense. In other words, her ambivalence with respect to the endurance of her transnational ties to Brazil may be a product of her membership to a more relaxed social network of Brazilians. Though Watertown Massachusetts harbors a significant population of Brazilian immigrants, Beatrice explains that no single Brazilian municipality is represented by an overwhelmingly majority and that most other Brazilian families with whom her parents maintain strong social bonds, they met in the United States. Her attachment to Brazil may thus be similarly relaxed, and the stakes of active participation in transnational social life less acute. Perhaps her distinctly flexible attitude towards

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transnational belonging is best encapsulated by her insistence that social ties and trust can be maintained online. She claims that while her mother and father both use Facebook, they tend to “underestimate”\(^\text{177}\) the potential of these social networking tools for sustaining colorful and dynamic relationships across borders.

They always tell me, ‘It’s important to visit’ or ‘It’s important to come home,’ and when I was little, they literally forced me to go to Minas. My sisters and I would sometimes throw, like, total fits when they told us we had to go visit my grandparents for the summer. Even now they get on my case sometimes. But I totally think I can still be engaged with Brazil and with people over there if I use Facebook and stuff. It works for me. It might not work for some people. But it works for me.\(^\text{178}\)

The adaptability of Beatrice’s social engagement with family and friends abroad also seems to provide her with a more dilated sense of belonging. Beatrice seems committed to Brazil at large, despite its cultural heterogeneity. As she slurped the last of her cocoa and began to pick the remaining marshmallows from the bottom of the cup, I asked Beatrice how she imagines herself as a “member” of Brazil and whether her family’s alliance with Minas Gerais takes precedence over solidarity with a larger Brazilian community. Flicking the final marshmallow that he had managed to harvest from her mug out into the parking lot of the café, she responded with a nonchalance that I had, after nearly an hour of conversation, grown accustomed to.

My parents do definitely. But I don’t really think of myself as from Minas or from any particular place in Brazil. Like, I didn’t grow up in Minas so I can’t really call that my home and more than I can call the rest of Brazil my home, you know? I think of myself as Brazilian. When I think of Brazil I imagine the outline of the country in my head and the flag, not, like, any one particular city or neighborhood. I know that might be kind of confusing. Where did you say your

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Dad is from again? Maranhão? There are so many different Brazils. [Laughs] At least that’s what everyone says.\textsuperscript{179}

Beatrice playfully engages in a mode belonging that doesn’t necessarily privilege a particular local experience of Brazil or the United States, but rather focuses on loosely shared national identity as its foundation. Perhaps Beatrice is engaged in a more de-centered diasporic sense of belonging, an imagined dialogue and exchange with a larger, possibly fictional, vision of Brazil that connects her “not just with [her] family in Minas Gerais, but to Brazilians everywhere.”\textsuperscript{180} Nevertheless, her relaxed commitment to a more nebulous conception of a global Brazilian community is more accommodating of her own interests and the uncertainty of her professional life than it is committed to an ideology of solidarity despite dispersion. In fact, remembering Amanda’s insistence that she is a “Brazilian-American, \textit{in that order},”\textsuperscript{181} I decided to turn this emphatic assertion into question for Beatrice: \textit{Would you consider yourself an American-Brazilian or Brazilian-American?} The inquiry provoked a drastically different response, but one which did not surprise me in the least. Beatrice answered simply, “Does it really matter?”

I did, however, find myself confused by her final comments, which seemed at odds with the sentiment of ambivalence – though not indifference – she had articulated during our conversation. As we walked back to the subway station, bracing ourselves against the cold wind, Beatrice expressed a hope to return to Brazil in the future, though not necessarily to Minas Gerais, for an extended period. “I’m flexible,” the wind had picked up suddenly and now she was nearly yelling, “All I know is that someday I want to live in Brazil. Maybe not forever, but I definitely want to go back.” I pondered these words carefully for the remainder of our walk to the station, and when we arrived, now safely shielded from the weather, I turned to Beatrice and asked why, when she had expressed such explicit impatience with her parents’ insistence that she visit Brazil, she “definitely” wanted to return. Her answer only compounded my confusion, as notes of nostalgia touched her voice. “I’m in love with Brazil, André. I miss it a lot sometimes.

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But it’s not the most important thing in my life right now.”

After these final remarks, Beatrice leaned forward to give me a peck on both cheeks, a customary Brazilian farewell gesture, and skipping down the stairs of the subway terminal, she disappeared through the doors of the departing car.

Too Far From Home
Anselmo Cassiano (22)

I met Anselmo at a quiet get-together, in a mutual friend’s dorm room, during my second year at university; although, to say we “met” does not accurately capture how fleeting our first encounter truly was. In fact, we became acquainted only after he accidentally bumped my arm on his way to the restroom and knocked my drink to the ground. Apologizing profusely and blushing, Anselmo introduced himself after we mopped up the mess. This was the last I saw of Anselmo that night, unaware that I had unknowingly stumbled upon a fellow brasileiro, and it would be several months before we crossed paths again, at similar party. “Adam said you’re Brazilian…” Anselmo broke a pervasive silence that had gotten a hold on our conversation. He, I, and Adam, our mutual friend, had been chatting quietly in the corner of the room, removed from the debauchery typical of college socializing. “My mom is from Curitiba.” He smiled momentarily, but quickly looked down at the floor, tracing circles with his finger on his corduroy pants. I remembered how shy he had seemed the other night, when he spilled my drink, and deduced that his remark, this timid gesture of alliance, had probably taken much gumption to say at all. Intent on easing his bashful anxiety, I responded cheerfully, confirming that I was indeed Brazilian and adding how relieved I was to finally meet someone like me on campus. Despite my attempt to befriend Anselmo, his timidity persisted and again we parted ways, this time for several years, having shared little more than pleasantries and an ephemeral common ground. Perhaps my delight to have found another Brazilian amongst my cohort, exaggerated though it was, had somehow unnerved him; or, perhaps, my response had been too eager when he had only revealed his

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background to me because he had felt obligated, given our mutual friend, to introduce himself more honestly. In fact, I remember a moment when Adam asked playfully if the two of us, that is, Anselmo and I, might speak to each other in Portuguese, just for a moment. “It’ll be like you’re talking in code.” Anselmo laughed nervously and I thought perhaps I heard him mutter something under his breath, just before he took a sip of his gin and tonic. It sounded like, “No. I don’t think so.” And thus our brief engagement ended.

When, in late April of our third year in school, the prospectus for my thesis project was approved and I began preparing myself to start my research, I remembered having met Anselmo, and perhaps – though these memories are quite foggy – having stumbled into him on several other occasions and smiling or waving hello. Having heard from a friend that Adam would move in with Anselmo the following semester, I asked that he inquire as to whether his new roommate would be interested in contributing to my thesis and he agreed to relay my message to Anselmo. “I thought you guys didn’t get along?” he said, puzzled at first by my request. Apparently our fruitless conversation two years earlier had left a mark either on Anselmo or on Adam as spectator. I insisted that he call Anselmo anyway, and that if there had been any friction between us, this would be an opportunity to dissolve the tension. We finally met for an interview just as summer was turning to fall, before any leaves had changed their color, but just as a delicate frost had begun to coat the grass at day break and afternoon winds were no longer warm but pleasantly cool. Anselmo had been shut in the library for several days, working on his own thesis no doubt, and requested that we speak outside, where the air was less stuffy. Given Adam’s account of my first encounter with Anselmo, some two years before this breezy afternoon, I was under the impression that he had agreed to the interview only begrudgingly, at Adam’s insistence; yet, he was so forthright, so eager to share with me his experiences as a young Brazilian-American, that I was taken aback. In fact, I began to reconsider the terms of our awkward first acquaintance and to suspect that what I had assumed was his contempt for me, might have been something else entirely.

Anselmo lives with his mother and father, a Brazilian immigrant from Curitiba and a Columbian immigrant from Cali, in Fresno California. It was immediately apparent

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to me that Anselmo is fascinated by his parents’ narratives of travel and the circumstances of their intersection, of which he is the product. He could not hide the smile that had begun to spread across his face when I asked him about their national origins and how they first met. Despite his best attempts to feign nonchalance, Anselmo turned to me, no longer concealing his grin and he proceeded to recount, in great detail, the story of his parents’ crossroads and the chapters that followed, eventually leading to his birth. They married Belgium where both had been pursuing masters degrees. They could not stop my mind from drifting, on the pleasant sound of Anselmo’s voice, to the tale of my own parents’ meeting in Mozambique, a story by which I am similarly enthralled. They too had briskly advanced from recent acquaintances to husband and wife and quickly returned to Brazil, where my father introduced his spouse, the first gringa to ever have set foot in my grandfather’s house, to a living room full of bewildered Brazilians. Likewise, Anselmo’s parents returned to Columbia not long after their marriage, so that his mother might become better acquainted with her husband’s family, whom she had not met before they took their vows. Yet, just as Anselmo’s parents returned to Latin American, the civil unrest that had plagued Columbia for decades reemerged with the collapse of a recent ceasefire, and thus the couple prepared hastily for departure, this time setting their sights on the United States rather than Europe. In New Haven Connecticut, a PHD program at Yale University provided Anselmo’s father a scaffold for building a life away from Columbia and apart from his family. Though the pair would not remain in New Haven for long – for they soon traded their frosty eastern academia for a sunnier western one – the United States was, and has been, “their final destination.” Anselmo spoke of their decision to leave Columbia with such intensity that, at moments, I began to paint him into the narrative itself, convinced that he had been present during their tumultuous exodus, though he must have been, at the most, only a daydream.

Whether Anselmo had so lively and colorfully narrated this story for the sake of my own research or simply for the pleasure of retelling it, I am still unsure; what he made clear, however, was that this narrative is of no little importance in his life, even if he oftentimes feels estranged from the places and people that compose its ornate episodes.

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I love hearing them tell that story. I don’t really know why, but I do. I guess maybe it’s because I feel like I’m so distant from it, you know? Like, I don’t understand it. It’s so different from what I know and from my life that sometimes I feel like…I dunno…like it’s an alternate reality or something. [Laughs] So yeah. I guess it means a lot to me ‘cause it represents something really foreign to me. But also, like, where I came from, you know? My roots. [Laughs] I mean it’s really all I have. ‘Cause I’m not really that Brazilian or Columbian.  

This story – the quasi mythical narrative of his parents’ travels – is his connection, albeit a tenebrous one, to the places “where he came from.” Nevertheless, the story is simultaneously “important” and “distant,” it represents “roots” that are “foreign,” and an “alternate reality” that somehow explains his origins. As a result, Anselmo often finds himself confused by the circumstances of his birth and upbringing in the United States, which seem to him both “too far from his parents’ [homes]” to facilitate a “real” connection with Brazil or Columbia, and “not really [his] home,” insofar as he feels unable to find a distinct solidarity with or affinity for American culture.

Yeah, so, I guess I don’t really know where I belong. I mean, I think I want to be more connected to Brazil than to the United States. But, I mean people can’t tell that I’m Brazilian or Columbian just by looking at me, ‘cause I’m not really dark or anything. So people don’t treat me like I’m Brazilian. They treat me like just another American kid.

Anselmo had become more comfortable, and now he smiled suddenly and continued,
You know André, I look at you and I think, *Wow. That guy is really Brazilian, like, he’s in touch with his roots.* I don’t have that. I wish I did. But I don’t. But I guess I don’t really feel American so much either. At least, I have trouble identifying with, like, “American culture” so I don’t know what that makes me…\(^{189}\)

Perhaps these uncertainties begin with undecided national solidarities and memberships, for when I asked Anselmo if he was citizen of the United States, Brazil and Columbia, he hesitated before responding and seemed unsure, not simply of his own allegiances but also of the extent to which these countries *accept him.* “I’m not sure,” he continued, rubbing his pant legs with the palms of his hands, “if, like, people over there really even *care* that I visit. I mean, I know my family loves me. But sometimes I wonder if like, once I finish school, if I just *stopped* going, whether anyone would really care that much.”\(^{190}\) Thus, the distance that Anselmo feels between himself and his “roots” seems to originate from both his own feelings of detachment form his parents’ homelands and his sense that his family abroad might not “really care” about his continued transnational engagement. Anselmo’s parents may frequently visit their countries of origin, send home money and gifts and even work across borders, lecturing at universities in the United States, Columbia, and Brazil, but Anselmo is unsure of his role in this circuit of exchange and doubtful that his absence from it will provoke much regret amongst family and friends.\(^{191}\) In other words, Anselmo seems apprehensive to call himself American, Columbian, or Brazilian and doubts to what extent his fellow Americans, Columbians, and Brazilians, at home or abroad, would consider him as such. His questions as to whether he “belongs” to any one of these nations or identifies strongly with any one of their cultures is both a product of his own insecurities and, perhaps, the sensation of neglect.

*If you were required to relinquish one of your three citizenships, from which country would you choose to withdraw your membership?* I asked Anselmo what I imagined would be a difficult question. His response was startling dispassionate. “I’m a

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pretty pragmatic person,” he said, “and the American passport does a lot for you, you know? So I think I would definitely drop my Brazilian citizenship.” I probed further, however, asking Anselmo if such a decision would prove difficult emotionally, if this choice would have meaning beyond utility, but his answer, again, was quick and calm: “I don’t think so.” Yet, as a short silence fell over our conversation, perhaps instigated by my own pondering of the same scenario, I could tell that there was more to the matter than Anselmo was disclosing and, indeed, a few moments later, he amended his statement.

I mean you want to be in touch with your roots. I want to be able to say yes when someone asks me if I speak Portuguese, but even if keeping my citizenship means being able to travel, to visit family, and maybe discovering who I am, I would still drop my Brazilian passport. I just don’t have time for that right now. Its not one of my priorities.

I was intrigued, not by his assertion that there was and would be no time for Brazil and for being Brazilian, (as a fellow soon-to-be college graduate I understood this sentiment); rather, I found myself captivated by his expressing a fleeting desire to get “in touch with his roots,” a desire that I share, for despite Anselmo’s insistence that I am “really Brazilian,” I too fear that this, in fact, is not the case: I fear that I have drifted so far from my “roots” so as to have lost sight of them completely. In the final moments of our conversation, Anselmo explained, in a optimistic tone which had rarely graced his voice, that after graduating, he plans to visit Florianopolis for several months with his father, in “a last-ditch attempt at making that connection.” Never before had his sense of estrangement, his distance from Brazil, seemed to me so acute as in this moment of hope, and his words were heavy, as if spoken from the depths of an exile. For Anselmo, the fractured landscape of his second generation experience seems shaky, unstable ground upon which to construct any sort of identity. His seems to be story of striving, of.

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grasping at a place and a people in hopes that he might take hold of them, as if by clutching them tightly he might know “where he came from.”

These are the voices which contributed to and shaped the work that follows; although, they are not yet finished speaking. Throughout this ethnography, my informants’ words appear interspersed with my own, their stories are woven into the fabric of the text, and our moments together – the collaborative endeavor of ethnographic research – unfold within my own analysis.
Chapter III

Fun With Words

The dirt in the road outside my grandfather’s half-acre compound is red like clay. São Luis has no seasons, only scorched earth or complete inundation, and in the dryer months João Pedro and I would often draw figures with our fingers in the crimson dust. In this, our litter-laden sandbox, we played tic-tac-toe and hangman, and though our games almost always ended prematurely, whenever a gust of wind decided to sweep away our sanguine sketches, perhaps it was the ephemeral quality of these lines drawn so delicately in the sand – that they could be here one moment and gone the next – that made our play all the more enchanting. It was on one such afternoon, dry and windy, that the boy on the bicycle, whom I will forever remember for his cruelty, came careening down the street in a cloud of dust. The playing cards wedged in the spokes of his tires announced his approach and we retreated, João Pedro and I, to the side walk to watch him pass. Like our drawings, he was there and gone as if carried by a current of air, like a swift zephyr. But he left something lingering as he overtook us. Turning his head in my direction and slowing the bicycle just slightly, enough to raise his left arm and point, he hurled at me words that rang out at a triumphant pitch over the gravel crunching under his tires and the playing cards snapping against their spokes: “Gringo! Go home!” Those words fell upon me with such weight that the boy had nearly escaped down the road before I had overcome that initial impact and mustered the breath to retort. And indeed my desire to spit a scathing insult back at the boy was so great that it seemed to surge forth from some cruel and brutish part of me, some simmering animal passion or fear. But perhaps some critical synapse failed to fire and the translation of pure passion to verbal articulation was lost somewhere and dissolved. To string together verbs and nouns and meaning in a language, his language, that I had only acquired, that I had only adopted, proved too difficult a task in the intensity of this moment and soon the sound of the playing cards grew softer and the red dust thrown up by his tires settled to the ground. The air was still and I was silent. My mouth hung ajar.

195 See Image E
Being Bizado

Amanda smiled back across the table at me and took a long, loud slurp of her coffee. An elaborately tattooed barista had just placed it in front of her moments ago, and she had been waiting eagerly for a pause in our conversation to take a sip. Amanda likes hot beverages, even in the summer, so I often found myself sweating in cafés around Boston during the preliminary phase of my research. The moment the mug touched her lips, she shuddered and squinted: the coffee was much too hot, I could have told her that. “Mmm… wow,” she half-whispered, “I totally just burnt my tongue.” I suspect she had come to enjoy our afternoon conversations, even though this grungy Cambridge café was, as she so bluntly stated upon our arrival, “really not her scene.” I laughed and asked her, as I carefully tested the temperature of my own coffee, what her “scene” would be. “Well…next time,” she said, “I’ll take you to a place I like…where the coffee’s better. We always call American coffee ‘cha-fé’ …get it?”

cha-fé: a playful combination of the Portuguese words for tea (cha) and for coffee (café) used to describe American coffee and coffee brewing techniques that yield a very weak cup.

Having heard this term many times before, I nodded and raised my cup in salute of the watery coffee-substitute I was about to suffer. Our first joke. The clock read three-fifty. I asked her if she had plans for the rest of the afternoon, for I felt compelled to continue our conversation. She sipped and smiled again, shooting a smug glance at our barista, who had been watching us from behind his colossal espresso machine, perhaps because, as Amanda had observed, we seemed out of place. “Not really…why?” she responded. I suggested we grab a cup of real coffee with what remained of the day, and she agreed.

Three quarters of an hour had passed since we ditched our the steamy Cambridge coffee house and its ornately tattooed and pierced employees when we finally arrived at a second café, just one subway stop away from Amanda’s neighborhood. Indeed, the scene

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was quite different and Amanda seemed more relaxed, leading me to a table with the confidence of a real regular. The place was modest. There were no elaborately named beverages, no sandwiches on multi grain bread with odd ingredients like “chutney” and “leek purée,” no ceramic mugs and certainly no legion of baristas. In fact, there seemed to be only a single employee, to whom Amanda nodded casually as we entered. I wondered if she always sat at this same table, in the dimly lit corner of the café, but I never asked. Having claimed our spot, she gestured towards the counter and raised one eyebrow. With a playful tone she said, “We have to get our own drinks…Like normal people.” There would be no one to serve us, nor any prying eyes, or scrutinizing glances. There would just be coffee. Strong, black coffee. And, most importantly, no cha-fê.

Initially, I was surprised to hear Amanda use the word cha-fê, a term I had only ever heard uttered by members of my father’s generation – folks who grew up drinking real coffee – and a word which I had never felt comfortable using myself because, honestly, I enjoy American coffee. I am not Brazilian enough to call American coffee cha-fê, and if referring to American coffe as such means sacrificing every cup of watery coffee that comes my way, I just can’t afford to be that Brazilian. Amanda, on the other hand, uses the term cha-fê not only as a means of comically articulating the inferior quality of American coffee, but also as a method of participating in an authentic “Brazilian-ness”197 that it signifies. The mundane circumstances of my rendez-vous with Amanda – the ordinary act of sitting and drinking coffee – become a site for a symbolic cultural gesture: the quotidian setting conceals a significant technique of cultural and national identification and a powerful claiming of agency. To call a cup of coffee cha-fê, acknowledges the unique position of the speaker, someone who has the authority to label that object as such. I do not have that kind of authority, or, at least, I do not feel as though I do. The utterance not only marks the coffee as distinctly American but identifies the speaker as distinctly Brazilian, for only a Brazilian could effectively make the distinction between cha-fê and real coffee. Indeed, when I asked Amanda if any of her American friends have adopted this term or others like it, she scoffed and answered, “How could they? They don’t know what real coffee is.” Here tone, and the brief giggle that follows her comment, implied that she recognized the deeply subjective terms of such a

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judgment. She understands that personal taste trumps any argument for objective “authenticity.” Nevertheless, the utterance arguably signifies and amplifies a strong sense of belonging. Amanda did not claim that she calls American coffee “cha-fé” but rather that we call American coffee “cha-fé”: her deployment of the term carries with it the stamp of membership, the watermark of Brazilian authenticity. Ultimately, it is not the authenticity of the coffee that is discursively implicated in her use of the term, but her own.

Investigating second generation Brazilians’ language techniques not only offers a means of understanding the extent and intensity of their transnational engagement but also reveals their often times unique sense of belonging and distinctive modes of identification with the homelands of their parents. Indeed, the notion that language and identity are intimately entangled serves as one of many theoretical premises that guides this analysis. I am attuned to the performative effects of language, to the possibility that “saying something [is] doing something”\textsuperscript{198} and that the “something” that “gets done” constitutes its “doer.”\textsuperscript{199} And yet I find it helpful to return, as a means of reiterating my accord with these terms of engagement, not to Butler or to Austin, but to Cervantes, who made a similar, though more subtle, argument several centuries ago. If the reader will tolerate a digression, his novel Don Quixote serves to articulate the particular quality of language which I hope to explore in this section. The knight errant, Don Quixote himself, engages in a sort of constitutive nomenclature that animates figments of his imagination, as he creates \textit{through words} the whimsical world of knight errantry wherein he transcends the humdrum circumstances of his life in La Mancha. In order that windmills transform into giants and that his skeletal horse become a magnificent steed, Don Quixote \textit{names} them as such, for it is not until Rozinante assumes, or rather \textit{is given} this name that he “is suited to the new order that [Don Quixote] was about to express.”\textsuperscript{200} More importantly, Don Quixote, whose lineage Cervantes’ purposefully omits, \textit{becomes himself} only when his imagined identity as a gallant knight is put into discourse; that is, only

\textsuperscript{198} Austin. \textit{How to Do Things with Words}. Cambridge. pg. 12.
\textsuperscript{199} Butler. \textit{Gender Trouble}. pg. 142.
\textsuperscript{200} Cervantes, Saavedra Miguel De, and Walter Starkie. \textit{Don Quixote of La Mancha}. New York: Signet Classics, 1979, pg. 60.
when “the knight had made these discourses to himself”

does he become Don Quixote de la Mancha, for in “openly proclaiming his lineage and country” he also “takes its name.”

We discover that speaker and utterance are in constant relation to one another, that through discursive articulation, his or her identity is thus constituted, at least provisionally. So when Amanda calls the coffee we drink, cha-fe, I take this to mean not only that the coffee is watery, but also that Brazilian coffee is better, a judgement Amanda feels qualified to make since she is, after all, “Brazilian-American in the order.”

Amanda is tri-lingual. She speaks English. She speaks Portuguese. And she speaks a third, hybrid dialect that she employs to communicate with close friends, many of whom attend the same services and Youth Ministry meetings at the Paroquia Santo Antonio. Amanda also speaks Porglish. It must be noted, the mixing of language codes is not a novel medium for the negotiation of plural identities by any means. Indeed, one need only listen to the cacophony of hybrid dialects that echo through most major metropolitan areas in the United States to confirm that the synthesis of semiotic systems is a common element of many immigrant cultures. Yet, Amanda’s integration of English and Portuguese reflects a distinct performance of plurality, one which differs from her parents’ linguistic self-expression in several important ways. While Amanda’s mother, for example, switches between these codes over the course of a typical day – she may telephone her mother in Governador Valadares speaking Portuguese, communicate her grounds for contesting a recent parking ticket in English, explain the plans for household renovations to a Brazilian contractor in Portuguese and, finally, order a take-out meal from her local Indian Bistro in English – Amanda moves between these systems of coding within every phrase, starting a sentence in English and moving quickly and playfully into Portuguese before re-engaging English to finish articulating her thought. This splicing together of distinct codes into a dynamic, kinetic, and elaborately transforming hybrid vernacular that unfolds and folds in on itself in real-time is, perhaps, a departure from her mother’s more disjointed negotiation different languages. While the

201 Ibid., pg. 61.
202 Ibid., pg. 60.
203 Personal Communication
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latter represents a contextual switching *between* mediums of linguistic expression, the former recognizes the unique utility of *blending*, and makes language “work,” in Austin’s sense of this term, in new ways. While the latter reflects a *coexistence* the former achieves a symbiosis and acknowledges that the further tangling – rather than *disentangling* – of complex linguistic overlap may actually provide an innovative means of communication and perhaps open pathways for articulating previously elusive ideas. Furthermore, this unique synthesis occurs on an even deeper semantic plane: that of words, terms and concepts themselves. In order to move beyond these speculative assertions, however, its is necessary to examine individual elements of Amanda’s hybrid dialect more closely and study the terms themselves that so playfully create new meaning. Take, for example, the English adjective “busy,”

*busy*: adjective *(busier, busiest)* having a great deal to do: *he had been too busy to enjoy himself there was enough work to keep two people busy.*

a quite commonplace, yet incredibly germane term used to express a state of being or affairs, namely that *one has much to do*. This notion is particularly helpful, Amanda explains, in the context of American domestic, academic and professional life, as it seems that “Americans are always busy, even if they don’t have anything to do.” Yet, there is no single term in Portuguese that can express the same state of having *a great deal to do* or perhaps the more common, though more complex, notion of *being busy*, which is to say, the performing of a certain “busy-ness” regardless of whether or not there is verifiable evidence that one actually has things to do, errands to run, tasks to accomplish etc. Of course, as Amanda explained to me, it would be permissible to simply state, in Portuguese, that “one has a lot to get done” or “a lot of stuff to do”: *Eu tenho muitas coisas para fazer*. But, in an attempt to turn what she considers a long, laborious sentence into a pithy expression, she combines the phonetic English word – the sound of the word “busy” – with the Portuguese suffix –*ado*, which indicates an abundance of something, and then deploys it in adjectival form following the Portuguese verb *estar*, meaning *to be*: *Eu estou bizado*. And, if she is especially busy, Amanda might add the Portuguese suffix

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–ão, an augmentative denoting that something is large, strong or ugly, so that she is now, *bizadão* rather than simply “bizado”.

Thus, what Amanda calls Porglish is indeed a symbiosis of English and Portuguese down to its constituent units. More importantly, terms like “bizado” arise from a spontaneous need or desire to articulate a concept that might be difficult to pin down, or perhaps an idea so widely used that it has been emptied of its affective potency. New meaning is arrived at through recalibration and playful recombination of existing linguistic terms and systems and, in this sense, “bizado” is a solution to a problem of meaning. Insofar as symbiotic coupling of different languages serves as such a solution, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’ notion of “bricolage,” the attempt to re-use available materials as solutions to novel problems, proves particularly useful here, not only for better understanding Amanda’s creative appropriation of available linguistic “material,” but also as a means of differentiating Amanda – in terms of these performative speech patterns - from her parents. If Amanda is indeed a linguistic “bricoleur,” the “material” which she re-uses is not simply the “proper” grammar and syntax of the English and Portuguese languages, as they might be taught for example, but also the particular linguistic play of the first generation. In other words, the second generation bricoleur reinterprets and redeployrs that which is already a reinterpretation. In fact, it remains unclear whether the term *bizado* itself was first used by first or second generation Brazilians living in the United States and Amanda “cannot remember where she heard it first.” Of paramount importance to my analysis, however, is not so much the origins of this word and others like it, but rather the sense and context in which it is deployed by second generation Brazilians and the particular social circumstances that it hopes to describe.

Regarding the relationship between language and the social, it may prove useful to return briefly to the work of Lévi-Strauss, who points out, in *Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté* (The Elementary Structures of Kinship), an important parallelism between linguistic exchange and social ties. Borrowing from the semiotics of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss explicitly associates the deployment of language with the

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deployment of social alliance as structurally comparable.\textsuperscript{207} Indeed, in his \textit{Course in General Linguistics}, Saussure calls attention to human language as conventional, as existing in an aggregate for shared use in a public sphere (or different public spheres), and thus as serving a communicative function. Language is, according to Saussure, “both a product of social conventions of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty.”\textsuperscript{208} Language belongs, in other words, “to both the individual and to society.”\textsuperscript{209} Though I do not intend to definitively align myself with a structuralist perspective on language – indeed in many ways the analysis I have provided of the term “bizado” questions the legitimacy of Saussure’s claims with regards to the linguistic agency of the speaker\textsuperscript{210} - I do wish to borrow from Lévi-Strauss’ development of Saussure’s linguistic theory, at the very least, the notion that language can operate as a lens for understanding the social, precisely because it exists for social use. Shared language, in other words, is often indicative of shared social space and comparable positions in social structure. In this sense, Butler’s reading of Austin’s theory of performative utterances – which emphasizes the function of language as a performance of “self” – might be reconfigured slightly, as a theory for understanding language as a performance of the self in society. Analyzing more closely the term “bizado” may therefore impart a certain understanding of the particular social field or fields in which Amanda is embedded.

It would seem that “bizado” describes a sort of transnational engagement and, insofar as linguistic dialects are a form of cultural production, one might argue that “Porglish” represents familiar mode of transnationalism. However, “bizado,” Amanda insists, “is a word that only \textit{we} use and it kind of describes our own sort of busy...it makes fun of how Americans are always running around, eating while they walk, too busy to sit down for five minutes.”\textsuperscript{211} I proceeded to ask Amanda to whom the “we” in this sentence referred, to which she quickly replied: “Us. My friends. Brazilian kids who

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{210} Saussure argues elsewhere that language is not a function of the speaker, but rather passively assimilated by the speaker\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, pg. 14), a notion which leaves relatively little room for agentic linguistic play
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were born here.” The term “bizado” has, in a sense, been *reclaimed* and put to use in the context of a second generation experience. Porglish, according to Amanda, “makes [them] feel independent and cool” and presents a cultural practice that is “really [thiers].” Moreover, she explains that “none of [thier] American friends can even come close to understanding [them] when [they] talk Porglish,” adding that, “sometimes [their] parents can keep up, but not usually.” The dialect seemingly articulates an exclusive second generation transnational subculture in which the tidiness of “here” and “there” – as representative of nations and cultures – is disorganized. Its constituent units do the same. The term “bizado,” for example, at once distances Amanda from a complete assimilation into what she calls the American “culture of busy” and acknowledges her participation in it. In other words, a distinct reflexivity undergirds its practical application. In conversation, “bizado,” insofar as this word denotes a particular disposition, is deployed as a means of recognizing American hyperbolic “busy-ness,” a “busy-ness” that is distinctly “not Brazilian,” while simultaneously conceding one’s partaking, on occasion, in that very busy-ness. It describes Brazilians being American. “Sometimes I’m busy like that,” Amanda says, “sometimes I eat and walk at the same time.” Perhaps Amanda’s firm assertion that she is “a Brazilian-American, in that order” can now be more fully understood not as a conventional declaration of solidarity, but as a testament to a performative mode of identification with multiple cultures and places that is certainly “transnational,” but demonstrative of a particular second generation transnational experience. Arguably, “Porglish” symbolically recognizes the limitations of enduring assimilation/ghetto-ization models for properly describing Amanda’s experience as an American born Brazilian, which in many ways constitutes a performance of “American-ness” without necessarily *assimilating*, and being Brazilian without necessarily withdrawing completely from American culture. The dialect at once calls attention to the endurance of transnational identification and social relations in the

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212 It is unclear whether by “here” Amanda means “in Boston,” “in Alston Brighton” or “in the United States.” Nevertheless, if “here” is any of these places, the “us” in the preceding sentence certainly refers to second generation immigrants.

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second generation, and illuminates the ways in which young American born Brazilians differentiate themselves from their parents as social actors and as developing identities. Simply put, in “Porglish” one finds a novel form of group solidarity, one which suggests that second generation Brazilians, despite their transnational social and cultural engagement, are not tidy reproductions of previous generations. Their material of linguistic exchange is not altogether dissimilar their parents’, as Amanda concedes that her mother also uses English and Portuguese when necessary. However, “Porglish” is often deployed as a performance of group cohesion specifically amongst second generation immigrants, and can thus be read as an articulation of an identity or mode of identification that is distinct: to “talk Porglish” is not simply to acknowledge its utility, but to perform one’s membership to a small group of Brazilian immigrants with a common knowledge and history. The hybrid dialect articulates a unique second generation experience and exploits this common ground as means carving out a distinct space within the transnational social field established by their parents.

Thus, a revisiting may be in order of recent studies that associate the successful integration of second generation immigrants into American social life with disintegrating ties to ancestral homelands. Competing research which suggests that the first generation will be primarily responsible for shaping and maintaining the transnational ties of their children might also be amended. Both predications overlook critical elements of the second generation experience which I have attempted to highlight in this chapter. While the former preemptively deprives the second generation of any claim to identity, social engagement and cultural practice that might be considered “transnational,” the latter strips a potentially transnational second generation of agency, as though they will effectively capitulate their authority as active agents in transnational social fields to an older generation, the “original” transnationals. In either case, the forecast underestimates the potential of second generation immigrants. As I have observed, “Porglish” is far more than a dialect, far more than the informal vernacular of a small kinship group: it represents a claiming of agency and of distinct identity for the second generation within a transnational social field. Even its constituent units – terms like “bizado” and “cha-fê” which have been reclaimed by American born Brazilians – signify an emergent mode of

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transnational identification that attempts to reconcile unique cultural and national disjunctures. The term “bizado,” for example, carries such descriptive power and exclusive meaning for Amanda and her friends precisely because its use requires a Brazilian sensibility from which to judge American “busy-ness,” as well as an understanding, through experience or performance, of what that “busy-ness” feels like. Where the former ends and the latter begins – the definitive shift in perspective – is perhaps too subtle to detect. There is no “switch.” There is, however, blending. “Porglish” itself is made possible not through code-switching or diglossia, these being linguistic hallmarks of the first generation; but rather, a distinct form of semantic integration that “blends” rather than “switches” codes. Therefore, acknowledgement of coextensive Brazilian and American identities embedded in the use of terms like “bizado” and the reflexivity and deliberation with which they are deployed by Amanda and her friends, reflects an interesting modality of transnational identification and integration that may in fact be a product of the second generation experience itself: of being born in what would be considered for the first generation as their “receiving” country and having to forge, from varying degrees of transnational engagement, a connection with a “homeland” that is, technically, not their own. This experience, it seems, quietly expresses itself linguistically, both in the fluent use of the Portuguese and English languages (diglossia), their apt combination (code-switching), and their playful blending.

Lost for Words

For the nearly year-long duration of my research, Anselmo and I never once spoke with each other in Portuguese. We never explicitly agreed to conduct our

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219 I use the terms (a.) “code-switching” and (b.) “diglossia” as defined in Peter Trudgill’s *Sociolinguists: An Introduction*, meaning (a.) “[the] switching from one language to the next when the situation demands” (pg. 82) and (b.) “a particular kind of language standardization where two distinct varieties of language exist side by side throughout the speech community and where each of the two varieties is assigned a definite social function” (pg. 117) respectively. See works cited for full citation.
interviews entirely in English, but somehow our common ancestral language was entirely absent from our conversations. Nevertheless, this absence announced itself subtly, for on many occasions we seemed, the both of us, acutely aware of the uncomfortable irony - though neither Anselmo nor I ever overtly mentioned our mutual discomfort – that two Brazilians should be discussing, at great length, the very notion of being Brazilian without so much as word of Portuguese gracing their dialogue. However, “language” and “linguistic aptitude” frequently became the object of our discussions, and Anselmo was quick to articulate many anxieties, the source of which he claimed to be his struggle with fluency in Portuguese. During our very first interview, he explained that he was not, unlike my other informants, a proficient speaker, and in so doing, hung his head, as though this were an admission of profound implication or, perhaps, a great weight off his shoulders. “The biggest problem, I think,” Anselmo later said of his inability to “connect with his Brazilian roots,” “is that I don’t speak [the language]. So…What can I do?” Indeed, I have endeavored to demonstrate, in Amanda’s case, how much can be done with words. Yet, Anselmo’s reflections raise another question entirely: Without words, how much can be done?

The power of language – in acquiescence, deployment and reinterpretation - cuts both ways. For Amanda, linguistic blending serves as a medium for the negotiation of transnational social and cultural ties and thus facilitates a claiming of a certain social and cultural agency, identity and, arguably, “authenticity” despite her status as a second generation immigrant. If such blending is to “come off” properly, fluency in both English and Portuguese is a necessary prerequisite. On the other hand, linguistic difficulty, which is to say, insufficient experience and fluency, may just as easily prohibit second generation immigrants (or anyone for that matter) from claiming a comparable agency, identity or authenticity. Whereas some second generation immigrants find a means of expressing themselves as real transnational agents (rather than simply “experiencers” of multiple cultures, nations etc.) through their linguistic play, others may find themselves unable to navigate the disjuncture between their country of residence and their parent’s homeland culture precisely because this play is not available to them. While

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220 Austin. How to Do Things with Words. pg, 12.
the former declares a degree of agency by “having fun with words,” the latter finds in linguistic expression only a perpetual denial of identification with their ancestral homeland.

Here, I use the term “denial” deliberately, for it entails also an external judgment: it implies that such cultural authenticity may be withheld or validated by other individuals or communities. When we speak of language (more specifically a deficiency in linguistic aptitude) as cause for the “denial” of authenticity, we therefore acknowledge not only a speaker, but an audience with the power to judge. We recognize language as subject to scrutiny. Indeed, it may operate at times as an index of authenticity, a criteria for administering authenticity tests, particularly in cases where a lacking linguistic fluency disqualifies the speaker as “authentic.” This dilemma is more akin to Anselmo’s experience and is made all the more complex granted that family members and close family friends are often the administrators of these subtle authenticity tests, using language – consciously or not – as a means of judging the legitimacy of his claim to “authentic” Brazilian identity. In fact, he describes an uncomfortable “distance” that developed between himself and his relatives abroad when his linguistic struggles and disinclination to speak Portuguese could no longer be construed as inexperience or childish timorousness. Amongst close family, he quickly earned the title “gringo,” a term he treats with a particular disdain, as his parents occasionally use the term in a more pejorative manner to refer to white Americans for whom they may harbor resentment. “Of course,” he explains, “It isn’t supposed to be mean, or anything,” nor is it explicitly intended call attention the aforementioned cultural and social “distance.” However, as the resident “gringo” in a family of Brazilians, Anselmo often feels as though his status amongst kinfolk is that of an “outsider” or a “stranger” and fears that what may be labeled as playful teasing, often smuggles a tacit contestation of his cultural authenticity. Such an epithet – “gringo” – could arguably describe other personal attributes or social mannerisms unrelated to language or linguistic aptitude. The term might refer alternatively to skin color, to public temperament, and, more abstractly, to a frame of mind or cultural sensibility. Nevertheless, he attributes his marginal status within his own

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family to his trouble with Portuguese. “If I could only speak!” he throws up his hands melodramatically and casts his gaze upwards, as if pleading for the miraculous intervention of some higher power. He chuckles, amused by his own satire, but soon assumes his usual stoicism. “But seriously,” he says, turning back towards the me and my recorder, “It’s hard when I don’t speak their language.”

From a linguistic impasse thus stems a social and cultural denial. Another, perhaps most debilitating, aspect of such linguistic difficulties is that the source of judgment - which is to say, the administrator of the authenticity test – may be Anselmo himself, for he can “hear [his] mistakes when [he] speaks in Portuguese, but cannot correct them.” In his linguistic shortcomings, Anselmo is acutely aware that he falls short of authenticity. In other words, this denial of authenticity is validated both by an external judgment – by a consensus amongst family members that Anselmo, the “gringo,” is not really Brazilian– and by a personal one – by his own subjective concession that he is not really Brazilian, or Brazilian enough - and thus Anselmo perceives himself as an object of twofold scrutiny: his authenticity seems questionable to kinfolk and feels questionable internally. When I first asked Anselmo, for example, whether he honestly thought that his family in Brazil considered him a “gringo,” or if they used the term only facetiously, to playfully tease rather than to undermine, Anselmo responded bluntly: “I don’t think. I know. I am that gringo.” Thus, Anselmo is in many ways complicit in promoting the legitimacy of his hurtful title. He is a self-proclaimed “gringo.” His status as “outsider,” as “stranger,” and as “visitor” is, to some extent, self-imposed. Furthermore, that Anselmo’s perceived relegation to the position of “Other” – regardless of the circumstances of this demotion – arises primarily from linguistic deficiency presents another, perhaps more complicated, dilemma, insofar as it prohibits him from effectively communicating the emotional and social consequences of this estrangement: if he were to attempt to dispute, for example, his title – “gringo” – on the grounds that such a moniker was in fact hurtful and alienating, he would not have the linguistic capacity to do so. In challenging its application, he would only undermine his own efforts. Of course, he stipulates, he might ask his mother to relay his concern to Brazilian family members

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on his behalf, but the very fact of his dependence on her translation would, he claims, also reinforce the notion that he does not “belong.”

Yet, even the taciturnity Anselmo has come to adopt when faced with this predicament does not itself provide sufficient refuge, for every moment that he sits in silence, unable to articulate his thoughts and desires to his own family, he feels equally foreign and equally considered as such. He senses, therefore, his cultural authenticity being tacitly debated and denied in both his labored attempts at communication and his reticence: to speak is to expose himself to the overt denial of authenticity yet to remain silent is to abdicate his claim to that authenticity altogether.

Anselmo’s predicament thus seems almost insurmountable, and his every effort to seize some sense of “authentic” Brazilian identity utterly futile. Moreover, recalling the assertion made earlier in this section, namely that language is both a medium of self expression and the expression of the self in society, Anselmo’s difficulty speaking Portuguese assumes more troubling implications still, for his struggle seems to disqualify him as an active agent in a transnational social field. Interestingly, dialogic and linguistic metaphors permeate the contemporary discourse and literature of transnational studies, wherein the transnational social field is often described as holding localities “in conversation” with each other, and thus the transnational social field perspective for research finds itself most interested in the dissonance and harmony that might arise from these local-to-local “dialogues.”

There is, however, a mode of reading and interpreting these assertions that is far less metaphorical. If, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, social cohesion relies fundamentally on linguistic exchange between active social agents, multiple languages and linguistic aptitudes effectively hold the transnational social field together, however fluidly, by providing transnational actors means of self expression and social communication in sending and receiving countries. As such, Anselmo may find himself marginalized within the transnational social field in which his parents are embedded precisely because he speaks no Portuguese and thus the locales which make up the topography of his transnational social field are not “in conversation.” Indeed, Anselmo

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often commented on his perceived lack of obligation or duty with respect these trans-border social connections, claiming that “[his] family in Brazil don’t really ask for anything from [him].” That transnational social responsibilities are not asked of Anselmo perhaps highlights the degree to which generational deterioration in linguistic aptitude contributes to a peripheral social engagement within, if not complete exclusion from, transnational social fields. However, to construe such exclusion or marginality as abdication or deliberate social withdrawal would be to overlook the crucial element of self expression always involved in language which I have heretofore discussed. That language articulates social position and cultural identity makes linguistic impassess dually debilitating for Anselmo, for he simultaneously suffers a denial of “authentically” Brazilian identity and an erasure from a transnational social field. While Amanda’s linguistic play helps her sustain transnational social ties and strengthen identification with the homeland of her parents, Anselmo is, in many ways, lost for words, and insofar as words, as Austin asserts, “do work,” Anselmo finds himself with little “work” to do in a transnational social field engendered by first generation immigrants.

**Cosmopolitan Communication/ Communicating Cosmopolitanism**

By contrasting these seemingly opposed social and subjective consequences of bi-lingual fluency and linguistic hybridity amongst second generation immigrants, I do not mean to suggest that language is the sole determining factor in the generational reproduction or degradation of transnational social ties and transnational identity. Nor do I intend to erect an inflexible binary that overlooks the possibility that language may have alternative implications for other second generation immigrants and altogether different consequences for their modes of transnational identification. In other words, my goal is not to propose that the strength and continuity of transnational social ties amongst second generation immigrants, insofar as they are a transformed or maintained through language, are either invigorated – as seems to be the case for Amanda – or hampered – as seems to be the case for Anselmo. These are, rather, individual modalities in a field most likely constituted by a vast multiplicity of possible linguistically-influenced trajectories for

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second generation transnationalism and transnationality. Tiabe, for example, who, like Amanda, speaks both fluent Portuguese and English and is the only of my interlocutors to have lived for an extended period of time in Brazil, self-identifies less as a transnational Brazilian-American than he does as a cosmopolitan, a pan-cultural orientation which is nevertheless linked with a multi-lingual experience facilitated primarily by his parents’ transnational lives. Indeed, Tiabe’s cultural and national identity is not so much hyphenated or transnational, encompassed by the negotiation or covalence of two nations, two languages, and two cultures, as polyvalent, always searching for connections, for supplementation and for novel experience. Unlike Amanda, for whom the preservation of transnational engagement through language is of paramount concern, Tiabe’s linguistic exploration demonstrates a claiming of a different sort of identity, one that does not perceive the transnational social field connecting his family in Connecticut to his ancestral homeland as the boundary of his cultural practices and obligations, but instead considers them to be a single coordinate on a much larger map of possible solidarity. Language again serves as a vehicle for this alternative mode of multi-national identification, which is to say, as a medium for the articulation of cosmopolitan identity.

It seems befitting that I should have first met Tiabe as I did, sitting at a distance from a throng of Brazilians celebrating their national solidarity. On the periphery of the Dia da Independência festival, perhaps Tiabe was already subtly announcing his cosmopolitan sensibility, situating himself at the very limits of the festivities where I and a slew of other “outsiders” looked on with a mixture of confusion and longing. Indeed, at the edge of Soldier’s Field, a small park in Cambridge Massachusetts, a group of assorted spouses, friends and plus-ones – those invited to the celebration but for whom the sertaneja music seemed alien and the food a bit too heavy – conceded their distance from the effervescence that had erupted by the bandstand. But Tiabe, unlike these other marginalized characters, had seemingly relegated himself to the fringes of the festival by choice. As such, he was the only member of this peripheral group who appeared content, perhaps even relaxed, to be at such a distance from the crowd. The others looked perturbed, pining to join in the debauchery but nervous that in so doing they might divulge the extent of their exteriority. A few fidgety spectators did try, in moments of sudden gumption, to cast themselves headlong into the swarm of gyrating bodies, placing
their plastic cups and Styrofoam plates on the damp earth and advancing, some more tentatively than others, towards the crowd. All returned looking glum, their attempts to integrate themselves somehow into the gaiety of the celebration having only thrown their differences into starker relief. But Tiabe, lounging comfortably in the his lawn chair, was not the least bit troubled.

Later that year, when Tiabe and I finally met, formally, to discuss my project and to embark on series of interviews that would evolve into a most unusual friendship, we almost immediately got to talking about language. In the name of methodological continuity, I had made a habit of establishing, early on in my interviews, whether my informants spoke Portuguese and whether Portuguese had been their first language. Tiabe circumvented the question entirely and proceeded to describe, as it were, his own philosophy of language. “I love languages,” he began, “I think that everyone should learn as many languages as they can. I’ve taken French, Spanish, and I’m taking Japanese now. I also speak a bit of German, but I think I would to need to practice more with my father if I wanted to be fluent or whatever.” He still had not answered my original question, but I was far more interested in following the thread of this burgeoning discussion of language learning than I was intent on staying faithful to my questionnaire. I pushed him further, asking what exactly it was about languages that he found so fascinating, and why he had emphasized their universal significance as an object of study. It was at this moment in our dialogue that it became evident that linguistic education, for Tiabe, is a matter of ethical importance. “Well, I think that it makes you more open to other cultures,” he crossed his arms across his chest and leaned back in his seat, assuming a pensive air, “and I think we kind of need that, you know? People are so afraid of what they don’t understand. But the only reason you can’t understand other people is because you don’t understand what their saying, like, you don’t speak their language. It seems so simple to me.”229 I immediately asked Tiabe to whom the “we” in this sentence referred, to which he responded: “The world, I guess.” Language as a tool for a felicitous form of cosmopolitan interchange and fraternity would resurface frequently in our conversations, and Tiabe would almost always use himself as an example of a paradigmatic cosmopolitan citizen. “Look,” he explained several weeks later, as we spoke over the

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telephone, he aboard an Amtrak train from Connecticut to Boston, and I shut in my house in Middletown, hunched in front of my computer, “I figure the one thing I owe to…” he seemed unable to settle on an appropriate benefactor, “the world…I know that sounds cliché, but anyways…The one thing I owe to the world is to be accepting of everyone and learn how to understand other people, you know. If there were more people who at least \textit{tried} to learn \textit{one} new language, I’m sure they’d stop feeling like the world was so scary.” \textsuperscript{230} Interestingly, the obligation which Tiabe here voices – to learn other languages – also requires an equally conscious aversion to linguistic complacency, for Tiabe associates the a global problem of “intolerance” with a “people getting too comfortable with their own culture and their own language.” \textsuperscript{231}

Like, my dad speaks German, but he doesn’t really speak Portuguese that well, and I ask him, ‘Dad, wouldn’t it make sense just to learn Portuguese, that way you could talk to Mom’s parents?’ But he doesn’t. That’s the problem. If everyone just shrugged their shoulders and said, ‘Well I guess I’ll just never \textit{really} understand those people because I don’t speak…Portuguese, Chinese, Russian or whatever…” \textsuperscript{232}

Though his voice was muffled by the sound of the train roaring through the New England countryside, I could hear a temper starting to mount. “If everyone said that…Nothing would ever get done. No one would ever make friends outside their own little bubble. And well…” the volume of his voice abated, “that sucks.” \textsuperscript{233} Like Amanda, language has great symbolic power for Tiabe; however, whereas Amanda perceives language to be a critical element in the sustaining and strengthening of her social ties and subjective identification with \textit{two} countries, Tiabe believes that language can and \textit{should} be used as a tool for expanding one’s cultural horizons and proliferating one’s solidarities rather than simply reinforcing preexisting ones. What \textit{ought} to be obligatory, in Tiabe’s opinion, is not profound, unflinching allegiance to one nation through limited linguistic

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aptitude, but rather, a relative depth of fluency in many languages as a precursor to a more honest and ethical cosmopolitan attitude. It was in this roundabout fashion that Tiabe finally answered the question which had precipitated this entire dialogue. I had asked, expecting a snappy response, if he was fluent in Portuguese and whether Portuguese had been his first language. Our digression, which ultimately proved more illuminating than any blunt answer to my question would have been, revealed that indeed he was a proficient Portuguese speaker but that “it really doesn’t matter that much to [Tiabe] that [he is] really fluent in Portuguese when there are other languages [he] could be learning.” Of course, unlike Amanda, Tiabe does not live in or in close proximity to a large transnational Brazilian community, for whom linguistic coherence may translate into a perceived coherence of identities. In other words, in his linguistic explorations, Tiabe does not face the same potential ostracism that Amanda might confront given the strong social and linguistic cohesion of her transnational village. Nevertheless, Tiabe finds himself more concerned with his potential fluency in other languages than he does with the social inclusion and cultural authenticity that sustained fluency in Portuguese might confer. If shared language can be understood as an important, if not the paramount, factor in the construction, proliferation and sustaining of social ties, then Tiabe’s receptive orientation towards foreign languages arguably courts a cosmopolitanism that emphasizes the importance of multiple solidarities and extensive, poly-national social linkages not only as personal principles, but as universal ethical imperatives. It seems befitting that Tiabe aspires to work as a translator for the United Nations, a position which seems to accommodate such a cosmopolitan attitude.

To suggest, however, that Tiabe’s cosmopolitan approach to national solidarity and cultural affiliation somehow signifies an erasure of his Brazilian heritage would be a mistake. In fact, Tiabe made it clear that his interest in foreign languages, citizenships and cultures never totally eclipses his “pride in [his] roots.” His cosmopolitan sensibilities never preclude his feeling strongly attached to Brazil, both as a real place and as a symbolic set of cultural practices. “I’m proud to be a Brazilian. Sorry. A Brazilian-American,” he made a point of emphasizing the second term, “But I really

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don’t think that has to get in the way of my interests in other cultures. Same goes for languages. Yeah, maybe when I learn Japanese my Portuguese might get rusty. But does that make me any less Brazilian? I still love going back. I still love making food with my Mom. It doesn’t change that about me.” It may prove more productive to consider Tiabe’s appetite for broadening his cultural horizons as a desire to *supplement* rather than to *replace* a cultural experience and a set of national solidarities that is already plural. Moreover, it is precisely this plurality, specifically his upbringing *between* nations, to which Tiabe attributes his predilection for linguistic and cultural exploration.

I briefly mentioned to Tiabe that many second generation immigrants with whom I had spoken did not share his cosmopolitan attitude and were much more concerned with preserving or, in Anselmo’s words, “getting back in touch” with their Brazilian roots. Thus, I proceeded to ask him *why* he thought he had developed such a desire to enhance his cultural, linguistic and national experience when so many of his cohort felt content, even compelled, to remain firmly embedded in inherited place attachments. He responded:

I think its because of the way I was brought up. You know? Not just, like, the *way* my parents raised me. I mean there were always so many languages in my house that I’m sure that has something to do with why I’m interested in other cultures. But like, there’s also the fact that I was always travelling to and from Rio. I got used to switching back and forth between English and Portuguese, so I guess I just like that kind of excitement.237

Here, the circumstances of his birth and upbringing reveal themselves as the primary impetus for his interest in a more or less global citizenship. Urging Tiabe to further consider the implications of his second generation status with respect to his burgeoning cosmopolitan identity, he rendered their correlation quite plain. “I think because I had to kind of discover these different places for myself, I’m just more confidant. I think I could pretty easily move to anywhere on the planet and be able to figure things out. I had to do that with Brazil,” he paused for a moment, playing with a

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sudden thought, “And I guess I had to do that with America too, you know? Cause neither of my parents are Americans so I’m not really American that way, right?”

Tiabe underscores episodes of his childhood that are not only transnational – that is, having transpired _between_ to countries – but also products of his position as an American born Brazilian, an experience of generational distance from the source of his “roots.” Both the transnational circumstances of his childhood and the uncertain space into which he was born as a second generation immigrant seem to contribute to his budding cosmopolitanism. Yet, to what extent Tiabe can be reasonably called _transnational_ is less clear. Insofar as the “transnationalism” designates both a social form and a mode of consciousness that simultaneously engage two nations in their scope, Tiabe pushes the term’s semantic limits. He certainly demonstrates his affinity for Brazil and United States as a citizen of both countries, but his attachment to these places seems secondary to another mode of citizenship altogether. Similarly, he describes himself as a developing cosmopolite, as culturally and linguistically polyvalent rather than _bicultural_ or _bilingual_. There is the sense that the hyphen within the title, “Brazilian-American”, might shift or proliferate at any moment to assimilate some supplementary symbolic term. Perhaps this is why Tiabe seemed so content at the Dia da Independência festival where we first met, so confident at its limits, so satisfied amongst strangers.

Thus, an exploration of the language practices and difficulties of second generation immigrants reveals a surprising array of identities as well as modes of multinational and multi-cultural identification that do not so easily fit the term “transnationalism.” As Amanda points out, second generation Brazilians have “fun with words,” and this play - the free association and bricolage of “raw” linguistic materials - often corresponds to much more fluid and dynamic relationships with their country of residence and ancestral homeland than is often expected of the second generation immigrants. Yet, by comparing the reinvigorated transnational social engagement of Amanda with Tiabe’s developing cosmopolitanism, this “fun” or “play” does not always signify the same subjective development. Nor is linguistic bricolage or exploration the only product of second generation upbringing, for Anselmo – raised in a similar cultural

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and socio-economic setting as Taibe for example – finds no refuge from the troublesome fragmentation of his Brazilian-American identity in expressive language play. In fact, it is precisely his struggle with language that disrupts his sense of self and casts doubt on his claim to Brazilian authenticity. Moreover, such linguistic trouble disqualifies Anselmo as an active agent in the transnational social field in which his family is embedded, for he cannot put the symbolic locales which make up this imagined landscape into felicitous conversation.

What begins to take shape in this analysis is not a dominant form of transnational identity or transnational identity formation essential to the second generation experience, but rather a diversity of possible trajectories and transformations articulated by different linguistic micro-practices. Moreover, I have observed, in some cases, the potential for the absence of transnationalism amongst second generation youth and particular anxieties that arise as a result. Above all, having conducted *through language* a kind of survey of the field, the theory that transnational social ties and cultural practice are neatly reproduced or tidily dissolved in the second generation reveals itself as ill-suited to describe the complexity of generational transformations. Whether language serves as tool for fitting in or sticking out, as a means towards global cultural exploration or, alternatively, as an impasse to cultural authenticity and transnational social engagement, *words* prove themselves to be an utterly important site for such transformations. Moreover, that these transformations are distinctly *performative* - that they involve active and vocal *articulations* of the self and of the self *in society* - will provide the foundation for my subsequent investigation of similarly performative Internet culture and technological micro practices amongst second generation immigrants. Thus, paying particular attention to how identity *performance* figures in the lives of these American born Brazilians, I have found, I believe, an appropriate point of departure for further investigation.

*My mouth hung ajar. The dust had settled. The sensation of this failure was more acute than any I had ever experienced before. That I was “at a loss for words” in my attempt to express my contestation of this label – “gringo”- an expression really of myself or who imagined, hoped and desired myself to be, amounted to a feeling of*
profound confusion and shame. I had, in effect, made explicit the fabrication, the falsehood of my own the polite fiction: that I wasn’t a gringo. In my silence I had completely given away my position, betrayed my hiding place, and in the light of day, on that windy afternoon in Sao Luis, the “me” that remained was quite empty. Or rather, devoid of what I had convinced myself had been there, namely a young Brazilian-American (in that order), and now full, in fact saturated, with what I had feared might be there all along: simply a “gringo.” At once, I was out of place, suddenly alien and the dusty street which I had fancied my home became just a street, and an unfamiliar one at that. Like a lost child I felt scared and so looked over my shoulder to João Pedro for reassurance, for a wink or a nod that might ease my panic, a look of solidarity to calm my nerves, or any gesture that might suggest that I was, in fact, home. But where I went searching for warmth and for fraternity, I found only deviant eyes.
Chapter IV

Together Through Tech

The cabin of the plane is cold and my legs have fallen asleep. Shifting my weight towards the window on my left. I peer out over the earth below, expecting it to be illumined by people, by the flickering light of their lives, but all I can see is darkness. Blinded momentarily, my face pressed so close to the plastic portal that I cannot see the body of the plane in my peripheral vision, I am happy. I am particular kind of happy. In the dark, I find an ephemeral peace, as I cannot tell how far from Boston we have come, nor how many miles we have yet to travel before we arrive in São Luís. There is no sense of distance, no markers or signposts along our midnight passage through the black. I have momentarily forgotten the burdensome journey that stretches out before me and behind me. I cannot see the curvature of the globe nor any of its topography, hidden by the veil of night: the immense swathe of earth that divides the locales of my life collapses into shadows, announcing itself softly only in fleeting glimmers of light that dance across its blank tableau. It won’t be long before I doze off. My mother gave me a pill to help me sleep and my eyelids now feel heavy. I used to be afraid of flying. Now it just makes me “anxious,” a handy euphemism that adults often exploit to confess the same naïve fear. Broaching unconsciousness, I try my best to savor this moment, this instant of suspension, through the beginnings of a drug-induced malaise, for I know what awaits me on the other side. On this side, I am happy.

When I wake, the cabin of the plane is saturated with sterile light, like three-quarters of an operating room in a late-night medical drama. The smell of airline food, that strange micro-waved marriage of organic matter and synthetic material, floats into my nostrils and fills my pores. Ham sandwiches. Ham sandwiches for breakfast. Unsure whether the other, more acute odor lingering in Aisle 9 Seats A through C is my own morning breath or my neighbor’s, I once again shift my weight towards the window, hoping to escape what has now become a quite putrid perfume: eau de air-travel. But the darkness has receded during my repose and I am confronted again by surface of the earth, stretching out before me like an infinite checker board. The patchwork topography of rural north-eastern Brasil, so different from the Boston skyline which had slowly fused
with the horizon days before, reminds me of something Amanda said earlier in the summer: The journey only makes the distance more palpable, more visceral, she had explained. Indeed, I had not fully grasped the weight of this observation until I awoke on TAM Airlines Flight 345, in Aisle 9 seat A, to the smell of airline food and altitude induced nausea, next to a stranger in cargo shorts. And to think, two nights before I had been sitting comfortably in my parents’ living room, speaking to my grandmother through a screen, which, like the blackness of night at thirty thousand feet, had caused me to blissfully forget the distance that divides us.

**Wi-Fi Wizardry**

“Well…I’m kind of a geek.”\(^{239}\) I had asked Amanda to what extent she used social media platforms and video chat software like Skype to communicate with family in Valadares. Though she attempted to conceal a smile, her giggling betrayed her enthusiasm for technology and gadgetry with respect to which she is a self proclaimed “wizard.”\(^ {240}\) When I divulged soon after that I, on the other hand, was not particularly adept at or keen on these methods of peer to peer communication, and that even my professors were more tech-saavy than I, she guffawed. The other patrons of the café turned from their lattés and iced teas to stare at us reproachfully, and Amanda mouthed the word “sorry,” not to the customers, but across the table at me. That I found Facebook strangely intrusive and Skype unsettlingly voyeuristic was, for Amanda, a source of great amusement and for many weeks after our first discussion of the subject, she teased me incessantly. Every misspelled text message became an opportunity to harp on my technological naïveté, and every dropped call made me somehow “old-fashioned,”\(^ {241}\) as if she imagined I would be better suited using a candlestick phone. For Amanda, technology, particularly communications software and social networking tools are integral to her daily routine: she checks her Facebook and Gmail account every morning before school and throughout the day from her smart phone, she tweets constantly and

\(^{239}\) Personal Communication  
\(^{240}\) Personal Communication  
\(^{241}\) Personal Communication
uses Skype to chat with friends before bed\textsuperscript{242}. Of course, these habits practices are not uncommon amongst modern American teenagers. In fact, the aforementioned itinerary might very well describe the daily routine of many city dwellers, regardless of age.

Nevertheless, Amanda’s tech based social interactions and digital media consumption, though certainly shared superficially by other young urbanites, serve, for her, a unique purpose: they keep her connected not only to friends and family down the block, but also to a kinship network that stretches across continents, reaching as far as Governador Valadares, some four thousand miles south of Alston Brighton. Insofar as her use of technology facilitates such trans-border communication and sharing of information, it is indeed imbued with particular meaning. As tools, these multiform software and hardware may indeed function identically to those used by Amanda’s next door neighbor; yet, she and many other transnational immigrants have elaborated and improvised with respect to the commonplace utility of such technology, pushing the limits of their communicative and transnational social potential. It is with regards to such technological appropriation and improvisation that Amanda proves to be a true “wizard.”

For example, \textit{Skype}, a program released as a simple computer-to-computer or telephone-to-computer program in 2003, now serves the Souza household as means of bringing dispersed family members into more intimate interactions than simple “chats.” “They call it an online chat-room, right?” Amanda asks me with an expression on her face that reads \textit{Duh!} I nod. “So its like an online \textit{room}, right?” I nod again. “So if its, like, a virtual room, why can’t it be an online kitchen, or an online dining room or an online bedroom, you know?” Amanda explains that she often organizes family activities using the “Group Call” function of the Skype program, effectively creating “family time”\textsuperscript{243} that transcends national boundaries and collapses time and space differences without breaching the sphere of the mundane, the everyday. What unfolds, according to Amanda, is a family life that reconciles the dispersion of its members by integrating tele-communications software like Skype into the schemata of existing kinship practices and obligations. Just as symbolic objects imbued with particular domestic cultural meaning serve to organize activity within what Amanda calls “a normal family” – a dining room table might invoke

\textsuperscript{242} Personal Communication
\textsuperscript{243} Personal Communication
the practice of sharing family meals while a bunk bed subtly conjures the image of sleeping siblings – so too does Skype now function, within the Souza household, as such an organizing force: “now our whole family – my mom and dad and sisters here in Boston and my avó in Valadares – can sit down to family dinner together.” She refers to this practice fondly as “skyping over dinner,” which has become a commonplace Souza family activity. Indeed, “skyping over dinner” has been adopted by Amanda’s parents and even by relatives abroad, a tradition now fully integrated and recognized by nearly every member of her extended family.

That Amanda alone devised this imaginative application of standard communications technology and, more importantly, that Skype, reimagined as the “online dining room,” is now a common tool in the Souza household, not only demonstrates that Amanda takes a creative approach to maintaining contact with family abroad, but also suggests that she has taken responsibility her family’s activities within a transnational social field. She has become, in many ways, the digital or cyber arbiter of her family’s transnational social ties, a function made all the more significant since the recent economic downturn which makes travelling to Valadares increasingly difficult. Amanda is not simply interested in electronics, but is the Souza family’s “tech wizard,” their “gadget-guru,” titles which denote an important transnational responsibility despite their playful tone. This informal leadership role is perhaps best articulated by Amanda’s sense of obligation to stay “up to date” on technology news and the release of any new hardware and software that might be redeployed in service of transnational social activities. “I like that kind of stuff [technology, gadgets etc.] anyways,” she stipulates, “so it may be easier for me than for some other people, but either way, I need to be up to date and ready to take advantage of any new…stuff…that can connect me to them [family and friends in Governador Valadares].” Of course, none of these modes of communication, even exceedingly personal face-to-face meals with family and friends via Skype, can stand in for visiting Valadares, for being physically present, for feeling the humidity fill her pores as she steps out of the plane at Coronel Altino Machado de

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Oliveira airport, or for embracing her grandparents and letting the distinct smell of domestically manufactured Brazilian clothing to tease her nostrils.\textsuperscript{248} Actually travelling to Valadares does not cease to be, perhaps, the most meaningful interaction with her ancestral homeland, a sentiment she shares with her parents, for whom Brazil remains the “original, authentic home.” Nevertheless, that the places which make up the topography of her “home away from home”\textsuperscript{249} are so often flattened into an image on a computer screen and compressed to the crackle of voices from laptop speakers, does not make them any less real nor does it completely relegate them to a realm of day-dreamt fantasies. According to Amanda, tech-centered family traditions like “skyping over dinner” operate as a means of “faking it,”\textsuperscript{250} for softening the oftentimes acute sensation of distance between “here” and “there.” Paradoxically, at no moment is the awareness of this distance more intense than it seems to be when Amanda visits Valadares, for the laborious eighteen hour voyage, the strange smelling airline food and the days of collateral jetlag all serve as reminders of the vast geography she must traverse to reach her destination and the looming return trip. Contrary to popular assumption that the increasingly global economy has heralded an era of “global spatial proximity”\textsuperscript{251} wherein the perceived distance between points on the globe is significantly compressed, for Amanda, the speed and ease of air travel, though it may annihilate time, does little to extinguish the sense of utter distance between her country of residence and her ancestral homeland. Travel reinforces the reality of separation. The institution of online family dinners, however, by making Governador Valadares accessible, to certain degree, virtually and electronically, serves a palliative purpose. Amanda has a knack for metaphor:

\begin{quote}
A trip to Brazil is like taking your car to a mechanic, but Skyping every night during dinner is more like...going to a gas station and filling up the tank. When you get gas, you can keep on going. You can keep driving I mean, until the tank runs out. Then you just fill it up again. When you go to the mechanic he, like,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{248} Personal Recollection
\textsuperscript{249} In this context, Amanda uses the term “home away from home” to refer specifically to Governador Valadares, although she has, on other occasions, called Boston and Alston Brighton by the same name.
\textsuperscript{250} Personal Communication
screws with everything and fixes stuff up. Then your car is better sure, but you realize ‘Damn, this car is old!’

It must be noted that access to the kind of devices that allow for this sort of creative appropriation of technological tools and the reconfiguration of their utility varies with class. Though, as Oneka LaBennett observes in her ethnography She’s Mad Real, urban dwelling adolescents “from New York to Soweto are often characterized as ‘constantly plugged in’ to technological devices,”252 Horst and Miller’s study The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication calls attention to “relative inaccessibility of the Internet” compared to the globally ubiquitous use of cell phones, noting that “while most low-income populations still experience the Internet as a distant and curious phenomenon, the cell phone mushrooms up from inside mud-brick shacks and under corrugated sheet roofing to become an insistent and active presence.”253 Thus, my focus on Amanda’s interpretive use of technology that requires, at the very least, an Internet connection and a personal computer, smartphone or tablet device, can provide only an analysis of the ways that second generation immigrants with access to these tools deploy innovative technological micro practices in service of maintaining their transnational social ties to their ancestral homelands and of constructing transnational identities. Moreover, such an analysis is not meant to suggest that families without the means of purchasing personal computers, smart phones or other internet devices cannot employ other means of sustaining transnational connections. In fact, Amanda explains that before she became “a tech wizard” she communicated with family members in Valadares, namely her grandmother, only by telephone and post. Nor does the focus here on the novel use of “gadgets” mean to imply that technological innovation provides a objectively “better” or meaningful mode of communication. The adaptation of tech tools like Skype for new transnational purposes is of interest to me because such practices, “skyping over dinner” for example, may be created by second generation immigrants and subsequently adopted by the first, demonstrating an intergenerational synergy that

challenges the notion that second generation immigrants depend on their parents for continued transnational engagement.

Many of the other young Brazilians with whom I spoke during my research, agreed that though their parents were the primary users of tools like Skype, they had downloaded, troubleshooted and explained the programs to their parents and continue to do so. 254 Amanda, not her parents, instituted “skyping over dinner” and the Souza family relies on Amanda’s “wizardry” for such tech-reliant kinship practices. In fact, Amanda explains that one of her concerns with respect to her departure for university is her family’s concomitant return to the technological “stone ages.” 255 “Without me to set everything up, to show my mom how to use Facebook, to set up an online chat session or even just to plug in the DVD player,” Amanda worries, “they might just stop using that stuff.” Though Amanda embellishes her family’s relative technological ineptitude, admitting later that they “really aren’t so lost,” 256 her self proclaimed leadership role is no less important, for through her command of technological devices she finds distinct empowerment within both domestic kinship structure and the transnational social field in which it is embedded. With respect to Amanda’s perceived position within her nuclear family, her mastery of innovative communications software and hardware, as well as her aptitude for creative reinterpretation of such tools, helps elevate her status above that of beneficiary. No longer a “mindless consumer” 257 tasked with doing the odd chore, Amanda considers her “wizardry” to be an important domestic contribution. “I feel like more of an adult,” she claims, “like I actually help run the family.” And insofar Amanda’s family is not localized to Alston Brighton, but rather dispersed transnationally, this domestic contribution itself transcends national boundaries. More importantly, the quotidian character of these “digital” micro-practices serve to underscore the interpenetration of imagined - and increasingly cyber - transnational social spaces and the real places that continue to operate as important frames of reference for transnational actors on a symbolic as well as a physical level.

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Amanda’s novel integration of Skype into the schemata of domestic life calls attention to what Tölölyan, Kotot and Alfonso call “the logic of the sedentary” and how the local figures prominently in transnational life. In other words, transnationalism is still very much emplaced despite the focus of transnational studies on networks, movements and “routes” of travel and communication. Amanda’s technologically inflected social activities suggest – in their being both transnational and domestic – that transnationalism as social form and practice is always “routed” through real places, be they cities, neighborhoods or dining rooms. Indeed, Amanda recognizes the transnational implications of these everyday, domestic contributions, and how the “domestic” and the “transnational” are reconciled through them. Insofar as her “wizardry” connects a larger network of dispersed Brazilians, she identifies an active agent of the transnational community in which she lives, helping her dispersed relatives and family friends stay “linked in” through cyber space. However, Amanda makes explicit reference to the “sedentary” logic of her tenacious implementation of traditions like “skyping over dinner,” asserting that now “Alston Brighton and Valadares are a little bit closer.”

Here, Amanda both expresses the extent to which her family is a constituent of what Levitt calls a transnational village, and by articulating her sense of privileged status within that community she emphasizes the enduring importance of locality – of real places – in sustaining transnational social networks.

The sense of responsibility that Amanda derives from this role as “tech wizard” can also be read as a developing form of diasporic citizenship and a desire to assert herself within a larger Brazilian immigrant community. If, as Levitt asserts, “transnational communities are the building blocks of diasporas that may…take shape…if a fiction of congregation takes hold,” Amanda’s desire to share her “wizardry” with Brazilians outside her family can arguably be considered a budding mode of diasporic consciousness. She has indeed introduced many friends and other members of Paroquia Santo Antonio to the Souza family’s tech-centered traditions; furthermore, the various projects of the church’s Youth Ministry, which Amanda leads, hinge on her experience with such communications technology, as the group often holds

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fundraisers which tap into the transnational communities beyond the one that organizes around the Paroquia and its affiliates in Valadares.\textsuperscript{261} Though her diasporic social engagement has yet to become more explicitly politicized, Amanda has already adopted an attitude of responsibility and accountability for a more abstract community of Brazilians. Aiwha Ong’s characterization of the “flexible subject” as one who exploits the “cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement”\textsuperscript{262} is, perhaps, a title befitting Amanda. Without coercion, she has asserted her self as a leader in her transnational community, ready and able to apply her set of particular skills to the task of reinforcing and preserving the transnational social ties that keep that community connected with a distant homeland and with other dispersed Brazilian enclaves. Yet, she is also “flexible” in the sense that she increasingly imagines herself as part of an imagined community beyond the transnational village in which she was born. Her solidarity is increasingly with all of Brazil and with all Brazilians, rather than focused on Valadares specifically. She is, arguably, a conscious diasporan, aware of what Vertovec describes as “de-centered attachments”\textsuperscript{263} and concerned with her own position in what Hall calls an “imaginary coherence”\textsuperscript{264} of diasporic identities. More importantly, her experience as a second generation immigrant supplements, rather than limits, her ability to contribute as an active member of a Brazilian diaspora, for her own ingenuity has already helped to organize international service projects that both strengthen the community of Brazilian immigrants living in Alston Brighton as well as invigorate their connection with other Brazilians by interfacing with schools and churches abroad.\textsuperscript{265} “I feel like I make a difference,” Amanda says of her participation in the Paroquia’s Youth Ministry, “but not just to people around here. I mean it does make me feel closer to Valadares, but that’s only part of it. I like knowing that other people in Brazil and other Brazilians here [in the United States], you know, people who I might not be related to me…I like knowing that we’re in the same boat.”

\textsuperscript{261} Personal Communication
\textsuperscript{262} Ong. \textit{Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality}. p. 6.
\textsuperscript{263} Vertovec. \textit{Transnationalism}. pg. 4.
\textsuperscript{264} Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” pg. 224.
\textsuperscript{265} Amanda asked that I leave references to Paroquia activities and service projects relatively abstract. Her concern was for other members of the Youth Ministry and adults in the congregation who might be averse to being implicated in this ethnography indirectly.
Of course, Amanda’s interest in digital communications technology is certainly quotidian when compared to that of professionals, some of whom may in fact be first and second generation immigrants themselves, who have devoted entire careers to the research, design and marketing of such tools. Indeed, skilled experts may have a depth of knowledge and breadth of experience with respect to the aforementioned communications platforms which she does not and which she may never have; yet, that Amanda, without technical training of any sort, demonstrates a distinct desire to insert herself in the workings of her transnational community – be they the domestic or public – and in the activities of a Brazilian diaspora through the use of these technologies is grounds for critical study. Given the attitude of multi-local belonging and attentiveness to the concerns of dispersed Brazilian which she displays in these technological micro practices, I assert that she must be, at the very least, considered as a forthcoming conscious diasporan. Indeed, if the term “transnationalism” describes a distinct form of consciousness, one that balances multiple place attachments and identifications in a “transnational imaginary,” then Amanda is arguably situated in such a web of imagined connections. She seems to defy, therefore, the model set forth by social scientists that predicts limited avenues of engagement for second generation immigrants within their transnational social fields: neither is Amanda willing to absolve herself of duty to her transnational village and the larger Brazilian diaspora, nor is she simply perpetuating the same style of diasporic and transnational engagement as her parents. Though the cultural practices that she has implemented amongst family and in service of her relations with other Brazilians – home and abroad - cannot match, in scale, the contributions of established intellectuals and professionals in the Brazilian diaspora who have comparatively vast resources at their disposal, her commitment to a Brazilian community beyond the domestic sphere suggests the development of a distinct diasporic

266 My father (Alvaro Lima), for example, recently developed and launched a Brazilian diaspora database, gathering knowledge and information from various sources and from a variety of professionals about the Brazilian diaspora for use by the Brazilian diaspora. Editors, contributors, programmers and web designers for the site have largely been first generation Brazilian immigrants and non-Brazilian adults. The site is currently devoid of any significant second generation contributions, though my father and his co-administrators have recently voiced concerns that the database is not accessible to young Brazilians and that second generation insight and knowledge may, in fact, prove vital to the success of the website as a codex for a Brazilian diaspora whose members are increasingly of foreign born status.

267 Vertovec. Transnationalism. pg. 7.
and transnational consciousness.\textsuperscript{268} Moreover, she is no less engaged because of her second generation status and furnishes distinct knowledge and experience as such.

\textit{In Digital Diaspora}

Insofar as second generation immigrants like Amanda assert themselves as active agents in a larger diasporic community through technology consumption practices, these very practices may also signify a \textit{reinterpretation} of diasporic “Brazilian” identity itself. In other words, Amanda and other second generations “wizards” in fact actively reconfigure what it means to be Brazilian in diaspora, particularly by opening up new spaces for the second generation to claim membership. Of course, groups like the Paroquia Santo Antonio’s Youth Ministry, to the extent that they are overseen by adults, provide for less autonomy with respect to the articulation of a distinctly second generation transitional and diasporic Brazilian identity. Yet, one need only consider the strong presence of American born Brazilians in Facebook groups such as “Brazilians Abroad”\textsuperscript{269} to discover the degree to which the second generation claims agency and unique identity within their diasporic community. The site was created and is currently administrated by a first generation Brazilian immigrant who studies and works as a soccer recruiter for the University of Oklahoma. The “Brazilians Abroad” Facebook group serves as a secondary source for generating membership and interest for the website, but offers something which the site does not. As a member of the Facebook group, one has the opportunity to communicate and share directly with other followers, many of whom are second generation Brazilians of mixed descent. Interestingly, the Facebook group’s title, “Brazilians Abroad,” is for many of these second generation members, a technical misnomer, for they are “home” – rather than “abroad” - in the sense

\textsuperscript{268} The distinction between “diasporic” and “transnational” identity/consciousness is incredibly tenuous and may be open to debate. Here, I proceed under the premise, as elaborated elsewhere in this thesis, that “transnational” and “diasporic” consciousness/identity are related in much the same way as Levitt’s “transnational villages” and diasporas as social morphologies. Where a fiction of “imaginary coherence” takes hold in transnational consciousness, therefore including in its scope communities and dispersed individuals beyond the local-to-local connections of a transnational village, a diasporic consciousness can be said to take shape from within transnational consciousness. The same might be said of “identity,” insofar as the aforementioned “imaginary coherence” is, as Hall argues, a coherence of \textit{identities}.  

\textsuperscript{269} https://www.facebook.com/brazilians.abroad?fref=ts
that they were born and oftentimes raised in the United States. Nevertheless, the website and Facebook group, originally intended as a resource for Brazilian sojourners, now serves as an inclusive virtual space where many second generation Brazilians can assert themselves as members of a dispersed Brazilian community. Reading this website and social networking group as texts – that is, as authorial articulations of distinct identities – provides an important site for the analysis of potential change and transformation of transnationality and diasporic citizenship in the second generation.

Before proceeding any further with such an analysis, however, I must address objections which might arise as to the meaning and function of technology and digital media amongst youth more broadly, objections most likely voiced by those who would discount such tools as worthy objects of anthropological study, much less as means of claiming individual or group agency and identity. That such tools present themselves to us first as material objects – assemblages of metal and plastic and glass, or, in the case of the Internet, as some imaginary space, indeed persuades us to ignore the possibility that these tools might serve a critical cultural or subjective function. For they appear to us, at least superficially, as either sterile or insubstantial and thus bear little in common with the texture of culture and cultural practice with which we are familiar: they have been, I assert, construed as either commodities for consumption, or as imagined environments for the amusement of the distracted mind. Both of these conceptions of technology and digital spaces limit the meaning that might be attached to or produced by either, and thus casts doubt on the project of reading them as sites of cultural exchange, contestation and reproduction. Yet, it would be a gross oversight to discount the real world implications of the interactions and social dramas that play out in the imagined space of the Internet and just as serious an error to ignore the possibility that cultural meaning might be attached, perhaps even indelibly so, to the tools and devices that allow access to these spaces. The latter – that is, the tools which grant access – I have already briefly addressed through an examination of Amanda’s integration of Skype into the emotionally charged fabric of transnational family life, hopefully liberating such tools from the prison of sterile materiality. To dispel dissention with respect to the former – that is, with respect to the possibility that the Internet could prove to be anything but an imagined space for the exchange of goods and capital, or as a virtual playground for shallow recreation – I find it
befitting to approach the question negatively, which is to say, *not* by asking the question: *How has the Internet, insofar as it can be used for transmission or reinterpretation of cultural values, had an effect on the material world and the lives of real individuals?* Rather, by asking: *What cultural transformations or conflicts in the material world can be traced to the virtual actions and discourse of the Internet?*

To answer these questions, one need only return to the ethnographic work of Aihwa Ong, namely her article entitled *Cyberpublics and Diaspora Politics Among Transnational Chinese,* in which she addresses the implications of claiming diasporic citizenship and identity through the use of online forums, blogs and interest groups. Heretofore, I have construed such cyber spaces as having a potentially empowering function for the negotiation and articulation of transnational and diasporic subjectivities and multiple national solidarities, yet Ong calls our attention to the real conflict that may arise when such “cyberpublics” are used and, more importantly, abused for the exclusionary deployment of national alliance and the oppositional assertion of shared cultural identity. She focuses her research on a global Chinese website that responded with particular vehemence to anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia following an economic crisis in August of 1998. The site, which claimed to be “the electronic watchdog of [an] ethnic Chinese diaspora,”270 mobilized a series of protests in an attempt to aid the Indo-Chinese victims of the attacks; however, the assumption that such a cyber public could effectively speak for a *global* community of ethnic Chinese ultimately proved injurious to Chinese in Indonesia whose safety as Indonesian citizens and residence was jeopardized by the boisterous intervention of the Huaren cyberpublic. Indeed, the protests facilitated by the site simply aggravated the tension between Indo-Chinese and Indonesians, amplifying anti-Chinese violence and aggression as well as usurping the Indo-Chinese’s ability to speak independently of the cyberpublic which had grossly misinterpreted the terms of the ethnic confrontation. While such a digression into the problematic imagining of a global Chinese diaspora as represented by a single cyber community may seem out of place in an analysis of second generation Brazilian immigrants living in the United States, Ong’s research offers several critical insights that may aid in understanding *how*

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these young Brazilians construct transnational identities online. Firstly, Ong exposes the potential, albeit a dangerous one, for organization along ethnic, national or cultural lines that such cyberpublics provide. Indeed, that the Huaren site sought “to act as a kind of disembedded and placeless political watchdog on behalf of the Chinese race”\textsuperscript{271} demonstrates that although such cyberpublics may have, according to Ong, “an unjustified sense that cyber-based humanitarian interventions will invariably produce positive results for intended beneficiaries,” they serve nonetheless as powerful and meaningful spaces that “facilitate new kinds of disembedded diaspora identifications.”\textsuperscript{272}

Ong’s case study demonstrates that national, ethnic or perhaps cultural solidarities can be engendered, strengthened and deployed through the medium of the Internet; moreover, this electronic solidarity is not inert or confined to the realm of intangible cyberspace, for as Ong demonstrates, they may have profound, of not devastating effects for real people in real places. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes of my own ethnography, is the assertion more or less implied in Ong’s work that identities can be formed, contested and co-opted for political and social purposes \textit{online}. Thus, the internet is not and should not be considered as a \textit{neutral} cultural zone; nor can it be conceived of as a static aggregate stable and formed subjectivities. Rather, the Internet can be a medium for articulating \textit{malleable} cultural, ethnic, national and, in the case of Ong’s research and my own, transnational and diasporic identities. There is, of course, a problem with the conflation of the terms “diaspora” and “transnationalism” which Ong seeks to highlight in her article. She is, above all, concerned that cyberpublics like Huaren seem to claim authority over a globally dispersed “heterogeneous peoples who may be able to trace ancestral roots to China”\textsuperscript{273} but that may or may not subscribe to, or even recognize, the Huaren’s self proclaimed leadership. In other words, the interpretation and use of the term “diaspora” as describing every Chinese immigrant, labor migrant, exile, expatriate and refugee regardless of place is, for Ong, a precarious mistake and one which had, in the case of the 1998 economic downturn in Indonesia, serious implications \textit{outside} of cyberspace. Nevertheless, we find that cyberspace is undoubtedly charged with meaning and capable of providing the setting, albeit an

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., pg. 85.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., pg. 82.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., pg. 86.
intangible one, for the assertion of diasporic citizenship and the development of transnational identities. Keeping in mind these assertions insofar as they are supported by Ong’s research, I proceed in treating the Internet and technological devices that grant access to it as objects of study and sources of meaning in the lives of second generation Brazilians living in the United States. My analysis seeks to determine to what extent these young Brazilians use the Internet as a means of allying themselves with an established diasporic community and also as a means developing a diasporic citizenship and articulating transnational and diasporic identities that are uniquely their own.

Though the “Brazilians Abroad” Facebook group primarily serves as forum for brief, informal exchanges amongst travelling Brazilians, the practical elements of the group extend far beyond casual dialogue, giving members a platform to share helpful advice that might aid their wandering cohort. The site’s creator and administrator retains the authority to decide the content that is ultimately posted online; however, the insights of group members, once evaluated, are made public and accessible. Forum posts and blog entries consist of contextual counsel for Brazilians who might find themselves, for example, studying in France and in need of “Frases en Francês para sua viagem” (French Phrases for your voyage) or, alternatively, the site provides a section entitled “Dicas de Íngles” (Tips in English) devoted exclusively to preparing America-bound Brazilians for studying, working and living abroad. The site also caters to Brazilian immigrants who have recently taken up residence in their receiving country, particularly in the United States, as job applications, links to language learning programs and cogent explanations of confusing American cultural practices are frequently posted as means of cushioning the transition. Of paramount importance to my analysis, however, is the strong presence of second generation Brazilians in the Facebook group as both consumers and producers of the aforementioned knowledge. Amanda is among these members, and explains that the site provides a “feeling of inclusion” which might otherwise be difficult to find, since “everyone [in Alston Brighton] knows [she] was born here [in the United States] and sometimes they kinds kinda ignore [her].” 274 Amanda also comments that many of her friends are also members of online groups like “Brazilians Abroad,” and that such

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websites are serve as place “to belong.” That the second generation immigrants, by subscribing to an online group like “Brazilians Abroad,” mingle and identify with first generation immigrants, exchange students and work visa holders, offering advice as “insiders” to other dispersed Brazilians and participating in a diasporic give and take, not only demonstrates their desire to assert themselves as active and productive members of a diasporic community, but also announces their claim to unique identities, at once allying themselves with their parents’ homeland while recognizing the benefits of their experience as American citizens. In fact, as Brazilian-Americans, they offer insight and advice from a position as dual insiders.

Participation in cyber publics and social networking interest groups may also provide a secure, personal space in which and through which to construct a sense of confident plurality and multi-national belonging. That cyberspace may be more or less liberated from parental pedagogy arguably compounds this sense of sanctuary, for as Amanda asserts, “online you can be anybody you want and your parents don’t know!” Thus, the autonomy and freedom of identity that the Internet often offers its users may translate, not just for second generation Brazilians but also for a multitude young people, into an opportunity to engage in a relatively risk free form of self-making. Moreover, when this sort of digital sovereignty is claimed through websites and groups like “Brazilians Abroad,” developing identities may be inflected by diasporic engagement and transnational attachments as mutual Brazilian heritage serves as the touchstone for membership and participation. In reference to her participation in this brand of cyber public, Beatrice offers a poignant assessment of the unique venue these virtual environments provide for second generation Brazilians, especially social networking programs like Orkut and Facebook.

“I sometimes feel like my parent’s generation writes me off, you know? I don’t think they think I’m capable of…I dunno. I don’t think they think I care about community. They see me as, like, totally passive. They’re always on my case, ‘Beatrice, you should talk to more Brazilians. Beatrice, you should speak

\(^{275}\) Personal Communication
Portuguese more often.’ But they don’t understand that I do all of that stuff. They just don’t see it. Cause they don’t know how to use the Internet [laughs].”

Cyber space, in other words, is a place to explore the limits and possibilities of Brazilian-American identity without parental surveillance or management. Alternatively, the Internet, especially those programs that grant further anonymity than do Facebook and Orkut, may provide a means of escaping certain cultural assumptions made on behalf of fellow Brazilians regarding “gringo culture.” This has certainly been my own experience, for during my adolescence, online communities, particularly instant messenger applications, offered an opportunity to safely and deliberately represent myself on my own terms, and a chance to melt anonymously into a more “authentic” Brazilian self. For example, my AOL Messenger screen name was, for many years, Brazilla723, a clever combination of the words “Godzilla” and “Brazil,” punctuated by my own birth date. Though I cannot recall my motivation for invoking the name of an iconic Japanese film monster in choosing this online moniker, I have no difficulty remembering the source of my desire to broadcast my Brazilian heritage to my cohort in cyber space. Whereas I had often felt tentative, perhaps even unable, to assert myself as authentically Brazilian amongst family and friends, I was capable of doing so freely and with little anxiety online. More importantly, I could strategically conceal my American upbringing and socialization which, for whatever reason, had become a frequent source of embarrassment insofar as it seemed to disqualify me as really Brazilian, particularly in the opinions of my classmates. Though they often teased me when I spoke to my father in broken Portuguese over the telephone or when I decided to fix a Brazilian flag pin to a baseball cap I regularly wore into school, as if my claim to authentic Brazilian-American identity was somehow a ruse, I felt no such scrutiny in cyber space. Their incessant ribbing, though mostly facetious, was nevertheless hurtful, and Brazilla723 provided refuge from their skepticism. Anonymity offered the freedom of representation that I was so often denied in “real” life. However, anonymous online avatar culture need not be construed only as means of escape. Indeed, the degree of anonymity that cyber publics

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276 This is a term my father and other members of my father’s generation often use to describe what they perceive to be a relatively sterile American culture and cultural pastimes.
afford – even those that publicize more personal information - may serve as a space where, to refer to Amanda’s insightful observations, “you can be whatever kind of Brazilian you want and no one hassles you.” Whether employed as a means of strategically calling attention to, camouflaging or embellishing particular elements of one’s identity, that one can engage in such an online politics of representation and in so doing, as Amanda suggests, “be the kind of Brazilian you want to be,” underscores the power of cyber spaces as a privileged site (or sites) for the affirmation, reinterpretation and performance of identity and, in her case, transnational and diasporic Brazilian-American identity. Amongst American-born Brazilians like Amanda and Beatrice, this liberty enables a risk free negotiation and performance of plural identities and offers a means of establishing themselves as vocal members of the Brazilian diaspora despite the circumstances of their birth and upbringing. Although this particular brand of diasporic citizenship may be more or less politically disengaged, Amanda’s contributions to cyber publics more frequently takes on social organizing purposes, as she explains, with respect to her work in the Youth Ministry, that “sometimes we use those websites as ways of getting in contact with other Brazilians in Mass [Massachusetts], to set up fundraisers and service projects and stuff.” Arguably, the Internet serves and increasingly diasporic social function for Amanda, as it allows her to call upon a diverse and dispersed community of Brazilians through mutual solidarity. Furthermore, these two parallel processes – the performance of transnational identities and the development of abstract diasporic citizenship – are intimately intertwined through online activity. As Beatrice suggests, the Internet provides a critical venue for young Brazilian-Americans to assert themselves as active contributors, as opposed to passive consumers or experiencers, of what might arguably be called a transnational online subculture. That diasporic citizenship and second generation status are not mutually exclusive categories, that being born in dispersion does not preclude a claim to authenticity or participation, and that hyphenated identity can offer subjective empowerment and benefit a diaspora simultaneously are notions perhaps best articulated in cyber space.

When I asked Beatrice, for example, whether she planned to reach out to other Brazilians after graduating from university, her response at once called attention to her perceived diasporic citizenship and emphasized the integral role of the Internet in
constructing and, more importantly, maintaining a sense of legitimate transnational Brazilian-American identity:

**Brazilla723**: Do you have Brazilian friends at BU?

**Beatrice**: Yeah, some. But I think that most of my *closest* friends are Brazilians...or Latinos... Brazilians or Latinos.

**Brazilla723**: First or second generation?

**Beatrice**: Oh they’re all born here.

**Brazilla723**: What about after school? Do you think you’ll reach out to other Brazilians once you leave Boston, when you’re in a new city, I mean?

**Beatrice**: Of course! [laughs] I mean, I hope I can find other Brazilians. I don’t *want* to lose touch, you know?

**Brazilla723**: Lose touch with what?

**Beatrice**: You know...with who I am.

**Brazilla723**: So...with your heritage? With your family in Minas?

**Beatrice**: Yes. But also with other Brazilians.

**Brazilla723**: Do you see it like that? Like a big community?

**Beatrice**: You don’t?
Brazilla723: Maybe sometimes. But I don’t feel unconditionally accepted. [Beatrice looks at me with a puzzled expression]. I mean, I don’t always feel like I qualify as Brazilian in that sense.

Beatrice: That’s because you don’t have Brazilian friends. Guess you’re the one who’s out of touch. [laughs]

Brazilla723: So yes? [I feel embarrassed]

Beatrice: “Yes” to what?

Brazilla723: “Yes” to my original question, about looking for other Brazilians after school, staying… keeping in touch.

Beatrice: Yes. But I can probably do a lot of that over Facebook and Orkut, so I’m not worried. Plus, I Skype with people from home like all the time.

Brazilla723: So the Internet is just as legit as actually being around other Brazilians or going to Brazil?

Beatrice: I know you don’t think so. But, yeah. It is. That’s the way I see it.

Beatrice’s comments here are illuminating for several reasons. Firstly, her slight trepidation with respect to “[losing] touch” with “who [she] is,” coupled with her reaction to my own concerns, implies that what is at stake in her virtual interaction with other Brazilians is both her sense of Brazilian identity as well as a membership to a larger transnational and arguably diasporic Brazilian community. Such a distinction is difficult to articulate, even for Beatrice, who has at times expressed doubts as to whether it is really possible to “lose [her] Brazilian side completely.”277 Nevertheless, she understands that being Brazilian is more a of responsibility to a certain cultural praxis or performance

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than it an essence, one that can unfold online. Moreover, that Beatrice expresses this responsibility as extending to Brazilians whom she does not know reinforces the notion that, although the term diaspora is unfamiliar to her, she considers herself to some degree a diasporic citizen. Indeed, when I explained to Beatrice the meaning of the term diaspora, using the example of globally dispersed Jewish communities as my primary means of articulating the character of a classical model, she exclaimed, “Oh, yeah! That makes sense! So we’re a diaspora too.” Of course, such extemporaneous use of the term “diaspora” is often critiqued for robbing the concept of its political potency and affective force; yet, to the extent that diaspora or rather being in diaspora, like transnationalism, can be framed as a mode of consciousness, a particular orientation towards one’s geographical or cultural estrangement from one’s imagined or real ancestral homeland, I argue that the term ought to be available to someone like Beatrice. Indeed, Tölölyan’s assertion that word “diaspora” has come to occupy a “larger semantic domain” in recent years certainly liberates the term for use by a greater diversity of dispersed peoples, regardless of the circumstances of their dispersion. Her inexperience with such terminology notwithstanding, Beatrice displays a conscious identification with a transnational Brazilian community and an affinity for a diasporic ideology of shared roots, albeit an a-political one. But perhaps the most striking element of Beatrice’s response, is her supreme confidence that the connections and solidarity required of her as a Brazilian and a member of a dispersed Brazilian community can be forged and maintained online. For Beatrice, and arguably for Amanda as well, the Internet is, perhaps, a crucial vehicle for claiming legitimacy as a Brazilian-American in diaspora. Cyberspace, in other words, provides a zone in which to contest their exclusion from a Brazilian authenticity on the grounds of their American born status through the performance of diasporic and transnational identity. They are, in effect, doing Brazilian American identity on their own terms.

**Cyberspace As A Stage**

Indeed, these online activities have a highly performative character, perhaps even more so than the playful linguistic micro practices discussed in the previous chapter.
However, what is achieved through speech in the case of the former, is arguably achieved through text in the latter. In cyber space identities are textualized rather than vocalized, and insofar as both – text and speech - represent “reiterative power[s],” they can both be understood as performative, and examined as such. I must therefore return briefly to Butler’s theory of performativity, as it appears that for Beatrice and Amanda the Internet serves as a virtual environment wherein such performances of identity can and do unfold, performances which are, in fact, surprisingly deliberate. Indeed, both Beatrice and Amanda make explicit references to Facebook and Orkut as platforms for identity performance, places where they can “act really Brazilian” or “be totally Brazilian” with little scrutiny. “I feel like I can be Brazil on my own terms,” Beatrice says of her engagement with other Brazilians through Facebook.

Sometimes my parents want me to be too Brazilian: they want me to come home for every feijoada and they want me to watch Globo, or care about Brazilian politics. And then, at the same time, I have these white friends who get weird if I’m too Brazilian. They don’t like it when I mix English and Portuguese, I mean, at first they thought it was kind of funny, but now they think its…I dunno…conceited. They want me to be a certain type…or a certain amount of Brazilian.

If indeed the Internet provides the opportunity for Beatrice to be a young Brazilian-American “on her own terms” – a space to assert herself as a diasporan while avoiding the imposition of overbearing parents or friends - and if such performance is acknowledged by her as such, my analysis of the online activities of second generation Brazilians has served a twofold purpose. Firstly, I have attempted to establish that, for American born Brazilians like Amanda and Beatrice, the Internet serves as a privileged and secure zone for the construction and negotiation of transnational identities which

278 Butler, Judith. Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."
279 Personal Communication
280 feijoada: noun, a stew consisting of beans, pork, beef typically served with collard greens, rice, and orange slices. The dish is common in former Portuguese colonies and the name feijoada refers to the Portuguese term feijão, meaning beans.
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engage the possibility of diasporic citizenship. In fact, the Internet, insofar as it provides an unsurpassed degree of connectivity and a forum for more or less unmediated self expression, seems to be, at least for Beatrice, the critical ingredient in developing and maintaining a strong sense of transnational Brazilian-American identity. Secondly, the performative elements of these cyber activities has illuminated the unique texture of the second generation experience as one shaped by highly reflexive performance, for which the Internet provides the perfect venue. This is not to say that these same tools, namely Facebook and Orkut, are not available to first generation immigrants; however, cyberspace seems to be, for many second generation immigrants, a space in which the claiming of certain cultural and national identities – which is to say, transnational identity and diasporic citizenship – are deliberately enacted. Thus, if transnational studies is to better understand the unique transnational identities and diasporic citizenship of second generation immigrants like Amanda and Beatrice, research must account for their unique mediums of expression and the increasingly digital styles in which and through which they perform them. In this sense, the Internet is arguably the “stage” of many second generation transnational identities and diasporic citizenships given that it is in this domain that they are constructed, or co-constructed, as young Brazilian-Americans attempt to integrate themselves with other Brazilians, home and abroad, while maintaining a certain pride in their foreign born status.

That Beatrice and Amanda, in describing the importance of the Internet as a medium of self expression, appear so acutely aware of the degree to which they perform themselves as Brazilian-Americans at different moments and in the context of different audiences, speaks of a distinctive performative quality of the second generation experience. In cyber space, they are, in effect, doing Brazilian-American identity in variety of styles – transnationally and diasporically - and always on their own terms. There is, of course, the sense in Butler’s work that identity is necessarily performed, that the subject is nothing if not a constant performance or series of performances. Yet, for Butler, the performance of identity is one that often disguises itself as coherent, so as to conceal its very enactment and appear unpremeditated, essential and, above all, natural, even to the performing subject. For Amanda and Beatrice, cultural and national identity is mindfully and deliberately performed and the Internet is nothing if not the ideal stage. It
is this premise – that the deliberate forms of performance which allow Beatrice and Amanda to assert themselves as transnational Brazilians-American diasporans impart a particular texture to the second generation experience – which I investigate more fully in the following chapter, for such deliberate performativity may prove to be thorny, and at times overwhelming, enterprise.

When my father downloaded Skype onto his laptop computer, our family seemed to grow several times larger. Suddenly, gruff voices and laughter layered with that rough texture of telephone conversations echoed through the house We would gather in front of the computer screen, packed awkwardly, the four of us, in my father’s cluttered study, to greet our extended family, or whomever happened to be wandering through my grandmother’s house, with a chorus of salutations. My father had asked me, several days before Skype became, for him, a common pastime, if I ever used online video chat software to talk to my friends. No, I said and chuckled. It seemed ludicrous to me. Awkward silences, endless technological troubleshooting and patchy internet connections all made for what was, in my opinion, an unpleasant experience. Besides, I told my father indignantly, I’ll see my friends tomorrow anyways, and most of them live a few miles away. Despite my insistence that Skype was best suited for online business meetings, my father demanded that we download the program and use it, when possible, to avoid the cost of long distance telephone calls. His logic of fiscal responsibility was certainly reasonable, yet, I sensed that perhaps, for my father, the prospect of more manageable telephone bills was not the true source of his enthusiasm. His eyes shone too brightly at the chimes of an incoming video chat, and he dashed to answer the call too hastily for a man of his age and stature for me to be convinced that his motivation was purely financial, a position he was stubborn to surrender. More revealing though than the youthful agility which he exhibited when answering their calls, was the simple fact that he continued, with great frequency, to telephone his parents and siblings. Thus, I began to suspect that its was with an innocent wonder and a deep nostalgia that my father grew so attached to Skype as a means of communicating with his family in São Luís, for he never seemed less than elated to see their faces and would spend hours talking into a computer screen, as though he had forgotten entirely that there was a screen between
them, as though he could, at any moment, extend his own hand and grasp his mother’s, or stroke the cheek of his newborn niece.
Chapter V

Reconciling Reasonable Differences

During the summer before my final year of high school, my mother had insisted, despite my many petitions for amnesty, that I meet regularly with a college advisor, not only to narrow the field of colleges and universities to which I would soon apply, but also to guide me through the process of writing my college essay which, in her words, needed to be stellar. Begrudgingly, I attended these meetings and, begrudgingly, I surrendered to my advisor’s guidance. The first in a long series of suggestions my advisor gave me for writing a pithy personal statement was to comb my mind, scrutinize all that I knew of myself, and generate a list of twenty reasons that I was “unique.” Producing such a list proved more difficult than I had imagined, for in reality, those elements of my personal character that I had always considered quite exceptional were, in fact, exceedingly mundane when framed as grounds for consideration as a college applicant. As it turns out, most seventeen year old boys of a certain socio-economic echelon of the American public have, at some point, played an organized sport, applied themselves to some form of artistic expression and, in some way or another, “given back” to communities in need. It was at this point in the exercise that I began to feel an ethical nausea, for it became quite clear that much of my persona and many of my scholarly and extra-curricular pursuits – which had all seemed, for the most part, meaningful – were now reduced to tokens of credit, redeemable only if I could deploy them correctly. Nevertheless, the list grew in length and once I had produced a sizable slew of “distinctions,” I returned to my advisor’s office to submit my work.

The office was on the basement level of a commercial building it shared with several other tenants, the law firm of such and such and a dentist’s office which made the first three floors of the building smell mildly of toothpaste. In the corridor that connected these neighbors, I remember observing, on occasion, a bizarre combination of sharply dressed lawyers and dentists in full scrubs busily pacing about, the former speaking in incomprehensible legalese and the latter in equally unintelligible medical jargon, muffled behind white masks. Most afternoons, I tiptoed carefully through this throng of professionals to the door of my advisors office, pardoning myself as we bumped
shoulders, although not one lawyer or dentist ever seemed to take notice of my presence there. Never once did I provoke so much as sidelong glance. Upon arriving at the end of the hall, it was with great ambivalence that I turned and surveyed their busyness, a momentary glimpse, perhaps, of one possible terminus of the journey upon which I had recently embarked. Indeed, that trek to my advisor’s office often left me feeling uncertain, anxious and altogether unprepared for the work we would undertake in our meetings. It was on one such afternoon, when the hallway was particularly crowded and the swarm of dentists and lawyers particularly boisterous, that I submitted my preliminary list of “distinctions.”

She scanned quickly over the document, a red pen poised in her right hand, striking off whole sections of the list with broad, sweeping gestures befitting of a symphony maestro. After only a few minutes, most of the list had been completely blotted out with ink. Feeling somewhat ashamed that my character résumé had proved so lacking, I began to explain that I could return to our next session with a better, more comprehensive list of exceptional character traits, but before I had finished my sentence she held up a single finger, silencing me abruptly, and pointed with the same finger to the page: “This one.” Her voice, usually robotic, now seemed somewhat lively. “Tell me more about this one.” I leaned forward from my chair, across her desk, to inspect the portion of my list to which she was referring, and I could see, though her finger partially obscured the text, a line of neat handwriting that read: “Brazilian/speak Portuguese.”

**Redeeming Diversity**

At this juncture in my research, I struggle to find much semblance of consistency in my ethnographic data. My informants have offered accounts of their experiences as young Brazilian-Americans that share little in common and tend to evade my attempts to “locate” them within the contemporary discourse of transnational studies. For Anselmo, Amanda, Beatrice and Tiabe, being Brazilian-American entails a vast array of different social activities, cultural practices, modes of communication and frames of mind that are not easily reducible to the term “transnationalism” or the condition of “transnationality.” Rather, I see emerging from their accounts a field of second generation immigrant
identities, not all of which are reconcilable with the theoretical terminology of transnational studies. In this field, however, a particularly intriguing detail deserves closer inspection: These young Brazilian-Americans all have in common a curious awareness of cultural “identity” as fluid, as malleable and, I assert, as performative. For my informants, questions of selfhood often engage the possibility of doing Brazilian-American identity in various styles, as is contextually appropriate. Some articulations are markedly transnational – such as the online politics of representation employed by Beatrice and Amanda – others may be more cosmopolitan in scope. Despite their differences, they arguably share this understanding of selfhood as performative - as relying on repetitions of certain social and cultural practices and expectations rather than pre-given traits - and thereby claim a degree subjective agency by performing Brazilian-American identity on their own terms.

Nevertheless, matters of “identity” are problematic objects of ethnographic study, particularly because questions of selfhood are so often fastened to the constructivist foundations of the discipline. In other words, “identity,” understood as social and culturally constructed rather than self-determined reflects a structuralist perspective that permits little latitude for human agency in the production and reproduction of selves. I intend to distance myself from such determinism as I make use of post-structuralist interpretations of “identity,” drawing primarily on the work of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Homi K. Bhabha. A structuralist framework does, however, provide a means of approaching the subject of “cultural identity” through grounded theory, with recourse to methodical social research and systematically collected data. In order to ground the esoteric rhetoric that often pervades post-structuralist discourse, particularly with regards to questions of “identity,” I focus on my informants’ accounts of common experiences as multi-cultural youth of certain socio-economic class in order to better understand why they perceive “cultural identity” as subject to a degree of performative fluidity and why this performativity may make the project of locating second generation immigrants within the discourse of transnational studies a slippery enterprise.

Of course, post-structuralist theorists of performative identity, particularly Judith Butler, do not claim that self-making unfolds unimpeded systems of power; rather, selfhood understood as performative is always in tension with ideological structures.
Likewise for Michel Foucault, who is similarly interested in the production and reproduction of cultural knowledge and power, subjective sovereignty is an illusion, a polite fiction that overlooks the nefarious cooperation of institutions and discursive practice to circumscribe individuals within a normative spectrum. Discourses - bodies of anonymous historical rules always determined in time and space - create and define the conditions and limits of certain identities, and although Foucault’s work is primarily concerned with the discursive limits imposed upon gender identities, I focus on how cultural identity is submitted to similar constraints. In the Preface to his book *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes his theoretical project as “an effort to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self” and an attempt to “decipher…how a complex experience is constituted around certain forms of behavior…a collection of rules…” I intend to treat “culture” – specifically Brazilian “culture” – as Foucault treats “sexuality,” calling attention to the ways that certain cultural behaviors and cultural traits are expected and often demanded by discourses that produce discursive guides, templates, or scripts of “authentic” cultural identity. Cultural scripts likewise prescribe a “mode of relation between the [cultural] individual and him [or her] self,” and thus being of a certain culture is to find oneself similarly subject to a “collection of rules” that define what that “being of” entails. This is the theoretical premise from which I approach my informants’ reflections on their own identities in this section: that selfhood or “identity” – even “cultural identity” – is in constant suspension between performance and pedagogy, as subjects – even when understood as “performing” identity– are always interpellated by discursive systems. Thus, this chapter begins with ethnographic analysis and subsequently moves into more theoretical territory, engaging several alternative perspectives – including Foucault’s - in order to better understand cultural identity as performative negotiation of cultural scripts.

Perhaps the most effective point of departure for understanding the terms of these negotiations as they are manifest in the lives of my informants, is to more rigorously explore the demands and anxieties of entering academia, since all four have now applied or are applying to a university, college or graduate school in the United States and have thus born witness to perhaps the most intense scrutiny of character imaginable, namely,

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the application process itself. Given our common circumstances, I too remember this time, though never fondly, as one of a prolonged inward glance and an even longer performance, as I wrestled to distill my character, or rather, my most appealing characteristics, into essays no longer than five hundred words in length and short, rehearsed sound bytes meant to woo admissions officers. I admit that such a characterization of the college admissions process is quite a pessimistic one. Moreover, that my own matriculation was, in my mind, a bleak affair does not bespeak the same of others, nor does it suggest that those who experienced this undertaking as uplifting or empowering are somehow confused, or worse yet, naïve. I mean only to suggest that regardless of the particular flavor that the college application process might impart to different prospective students, it is, I argue, a moment or a series of moments wherein, as Butler would argue, one is compelled to perform. And to perform deliberately. Therefore, it is a process that necessitates coming to terms with the standards and expectations of institutions, many of which are alien to us. This, my informants unanimously recognized. In many cases, they were eager to articulate the tensions and anxieties, as well as the victories, of the college and graduate school application process. In order that we approach their reflections critically, perhaps it is best to take as our point of departure something that Beatrice mentioned in late November, in what she called “a moment of clarity.”

Beatrice is quite fond of walking – walking while talking, walking while eating, walking while reading - and many of our interviews turned into mobile conversations, though I often felt silly, like a [lost] paparazzo, thrusting my recorder towards her face as we walked. “You know what applying to college felt like, André?” A lazy stroll through the Boston Commons and colloquial dialogue had swiftly developed into a brisk walk and a severe critique of the college admission “scheme,” more exercise than I had anticipated. “It was kind of like…selling myself, you know?” In fact, I did know, all too well, the kind of self-promotion of which she spoke. Intrigued nonetheless to hear her own reflections on the matter, I mustered the breath, my voice now belabored with fatigue, to ask her what precisely she felt she was “selling.” I was inclined to believe she

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had been referring subtly to the demand for cultural diversity in institutions of higher
learning and that she was “selling herself” as young Brazilian-American more than
anything else. This was indeed what she had meant, and she nodded in confirmation,
perhaps also acknowledging a level of solidarity between us, for we had both engaged in
the peculiar politics of self-representation that the college application process often
demands. She explained, as we wandered further into the park, that her college
counselors, her teachers and her friends had insisted that being Brazilian would give her a
distinct advantage over other college applicants, “if [she] knew how to use it right”285.
She said the word “use” with a strange inflection that made me suspect she really meant
to say “abuse.” What then does such “use” or “abuse” of Brazilian-American identity
entail? As I pressed Beatrice further, inquiring as to the particular manner in which being
Brazilian proved advantageous, perhaps even crucial, to her efforts to “sell herself” to
college admissions offices and applicant review boards, her responses, mostly anecdotal
episodes from individual college interviews, organized themselves neatly around a single,
pervasive concept: difference. “Being different…” she said with a coy wit, perhaps
unsure if I shared her sense of humor about the subject, “…that’s what it’s all about.” The
promotion of oneself as different, unique or special is, according to Beatrice, integral to
successful matriculation. Anselmo agrees. He explained, as we rolled about an empty
classroom in swiveling chairs in early February, that in order to “stick out” in a sea of
other applicants, he had to demonstrate some distinct quality or articulate some
exceptional experience. Tiabe expressed similar feelings when, pausing between bites of
a burrito he had ordered from a food truck, he explained that “pea-cocking”286 - the act of
calling attention to a unique attribute of oneself – was “the best strategy for getting in” to
college or university. When I asked what quality he had used as his lure, he turned to me
and smiled as if to suggest that I ought to know the answer already. Throwing away what
remained of the poorly made burrito, which had spilled its contents down his arm, he said
emphatically, “I mean, come on…I’m Brazilian!”

For each of my informants, Brazilian heritage and Brazilian-American identity
served as the marker that distinguished them from their cohort during the college

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application process. Moreover, they almost unanimously agreed that the choice to strategically highlight these distinctions was, in the words of Amanda, “an obvious move.” To be different, at least in the context of such a competition for acceptance into elite American colleges, is to have a discrete advantage. And, in the minds of my informants, the trait or quality which articulated the most salient brand of difference was, undeniably, their status as second generation Brazilian immigrants. Here, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of cultural capital and social capital espoused in his social critique Distinctions, may prove helpful in more fully understanding the logic of redeemable difference at work in the college admissions system. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital and knowledge, as opposed to social capital, is accrued through education and upbringing that affords a certain social status rather than through the social networks in which one is embedded. 287 The key difference, as Sarah Thornton points outs in her ethnographic study of club cultures entitled Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital, is that social capital “stems not so much from what you know as who you know (and who knows you).” 288 The capital redeemed by my informants during college interviews and through particular cultural references in college essays is arguably a bit of both. For example, by bringing elements of their Brazilian heritage to the fore in written supplements and personal statements, my informants deployed cultural knowledge in service of successful matriculation. All of my informants, with the exception of Anselmo, wrote college essays that in some way engaged their Brazilian identities insofar as they are manifest in a variety of cultural practices – preparing elaborate feijoada’s, listening to sertaneja music, and visiting extended Brazilian family for reunions, to name but a few. Thus, they deployed accrued cultural capital as means of “standing out.” Social capital also proves valuable in this context, as demonstrating one’s affiliation with a Brazilian community, in Amanda’s case for example, not only displayed a form of cultural knowledge, but also called attention to its source, which is to say, he position in a social network of Brazilians. Of course, invoking Bourdieu’s terminology risks misconstruing genuine pride and personal affinity for cultural elements of Brazilian identity simply as

redeemable credit. This is not my intention. That cultural experience and knowledge can be used in the service of mobility within a variety of institutional hierarchies does not itself preclude strong personal identification with those same experiences. Nor does explicit recognition of these experiences as a form of “capital” rob them of their emotional meaning. In fact, several of my informants expressed reservations with respect to the college admissions process, fearful that employing privileged cultural knowledge in order to differentiate themselves from enormous applicant pools, some numbering close to fifty-thousand prospective students, would constitute a form of dishonesty or, as Amanda describes it, a “betrayal of her Brazilian roots.” Her further reflections on this alleged “betrayal” are particularly illuminating: “I came home from one of those interviews and felt embarrassed to be around my parents and to be around my sisters,” she explained, “almost like I betrayed them or something. Those interviews were always hard. I always felt like I was selling out.” As Amanda said these words – again we found ourselves sipping on hot coffee in uncomfortably warm weather – I was moved to contemplation of my own experience running the college admissions gauntlet, and as memories began to emerge from the cavernous regions of my mind, I felt a similar retroactive embarrassment. Thoughts of my college essay, a document I had tried to efface completely from my memory, were now resurrected, and I considered, momentarily, if I might be able to dig up a hard copy. Though I telephoned and emailed my high school’s college advisory office and rummaged through old banker’s boxes filled with textbooks I never read, I could not locate the essay. My memory of writing the missing composition would have to suffice.

“Brazilian/ speak Portuguese.” Somehow I knew, before my advisor had even called attention to it, that this would be the “distinction” she found most intriguing. This was to become the focus of our meetings for several weeks and the foundation of my college essay, which, in her words would, focus on my Brazilian heritage in a way that was “relatable” to its reader. This statement puzzled me greatly. I had been under the impression that this list of distinctive personal qualities had precisely the opposite purpose: to emphasize difference rather than to invite identification. I had imagined that a college essay ought to underscore elements of its author’s character with which the
reader would be unfamiliar. Moreover, the task itself seemed unreasonable. How could I, in five hundred words or less, render “relatable” my own cultural and national heritage, histories and genealogies that felt distant and oftentimes incomprehensible to me? I felt utterly unprepared for this undertaking, unable to gather my thoughts, and awash with anxieties. The esoteric questions my advisor posed, presumably to inspire my self expression, only further confused me. “How has your Brazilian heritage shaped you as a young man?” Shaped me? What precisely does this word – “heritage,” entail? How can it shape me? Can my heritage even address me? Perhaps the dictionary will provide a clue.

**heritage;** noun [ in sing. ]

I property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance.

• valued objects and qualities such as cultural traditions, unspoiled countryside, and historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations: the richness of our diverse cultural heritage | a sense of history and heritage.

What have I inherited? And from whom? My father? His father? All I have, my “property,” is in pieces: pieces of other lives. Myths and memoirs. An unspoiled countryside? My country sides are always spoiled, always more or less coherent, more or less ruined. São Luís? I have seen but a glimpse. Boston? I have seen quite enough. The previous generations have left me historic buildings whose hieroglyphics are impenetrable. How can I value their cryptic texts? Before these questions have had even a moment to settle, my advisor launches another salvo: “What has your multicultural background taught you over the years?” Multicultural? Brazilian-American? Either side of my hyphenated epithet seldom seems tenable. Brazilian? My presence is only partial. Partially allowed. Partially desired. American? I am more present here than there, though I find myself longing to flee. I lurk about, fearful to be seen, nervous to be

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addressed as “we.” Here there is no culture. Nothing to read, nothing to reiterate. Nothing moves me to enunciation. There/Their culture is enigmatic, unreadable, so I am mute. Am I still multi-cultural? Do I still qualify?

*multicultural*: adjective

of, relating to, or constituting several cultural or ethnic groups within a society: *multicultural education.*

Perhaps I stand at such an intersection, though the ground here is unstable. I cannot stand up straight. And who can learn on bended knee? Another incoming volley. “How will your multicultural experience contribute to your academic life at the [University of X]?” This question I can answer. I have heard it many times before, and I will hear it henceforward many more. This is not so much a question as a demand. Not so much her curiosity talking but her ledger whispering, softly inviting me to “contribute,” to “supply,” to “give.” I can give. I know exactly what you she asks of me. My performance will be superlative. But at whose expense? When I return home for dinner and my father calls to me from across the table, “André, how was the meeting? Have you decided on what you’ll write your essay?” I can barely look him in the eye. I push the peas around my plate. I respond timidly. “Fine. I’m not sure yet, Papai. I’ll decide soon though.” A lie. He cannot know that I will be moonlighting another stage.

*Performing Reasonable Difference*

The sense of betrayal that Amanda had described during our chat over coffee was not therefore unfamiliar to me; although, the circumstances of our similar decision to focus the content of our college essays on our Brazilian-American identities were quite different. Amanda, who did not meet regularly with a college advisor as I had, was motivated instead by friends, all of whom agreed that she ought to write her personal essay about something that expressed her Brazilian heritage. This detail is not insignificant. On the contrary, it would appear that, at least within Amanda’s social network, young Brazilian-Americans share a tacit understanding of how the cultural and
social forms of capital discussed earlier can be deployed. Though their attitude towards their multi-cultural identities is certainly not *exploitative* – it would be crass to assume that they conceive of their minority status *only* as a means to a university education - that difference can be used strategically is not itself a foreign concept to these second generation immigrants.

Nevertheless, the potential ethical implications of this deployment of cultural capital, as evinced by Amanda’s reflections on the concept of betrayal and usury, are not altogether out of sight. To use one’s own identity and the experiences that shape it as the crux of a college essay is, Amanda admits, “kinda iffy.” “It depends,” she goes on to say, “on how much of yourself you use in the essay, you know? And how you use it. Like, how much is too much information? Like, when does it start to just be straight up showing off?” She paused momentarily, “Or maybe just, like, acting.” She explains that though her college essay focused primarily on her involvement with the Paroquia Santo Antonio, she made frequent references to its position as a node in a larger transnational network, integrating descriptions of Governador Valadares into the text and interjected Portuguese terms. Though this use of Portuguese words and phrases may have served to better explicate the broader themes of the essay, Amanda admits that they also helped to “spice it up” and give it “a better flavor.”

These comments thus highlight another crucial element of this situational promotion of cultural difference. That Amanda describes the “better” essay, now infused with a particular cultural knowledge, as “spicy” demonstrates the particular institutional expectations of difference that may often turn blatant racial and ethnic stereotypes into standards or criteria of judgment in the context of the college admissions gambit. “Spiciness,” a clichéd descriptor that invokes stereotypical images of a “fiery” Latino culture, not only reduces cultural difference to a worn out trope but also presumes the homogeneity of an imagined Latin American people. Amanda acknowledges this dilemma but feels as though, in order to distinguish herself as a college applicant, she had to be “a certain kind of different,” one that catered more towards admissions officer’s presuppositions with respect to cultural differences than to her own sense of cultural authenticity. “Americans have this weird thing for the Brazil they see in the movies,” Amanda explains, “You know…Soccer, the Copacabana, women with big… beautiful
women and all that stuff. I mean, yes, Brazil’s national sport is soccer but that doesn’t mean we only play soccer. And there are lots of beautiful women who tan all day on the beaches of Rio but seriously? That can’t be what people really think Brazil is like, can it?”

Amanda certainly exaggerates these stereotypical American media representations of Brazil, but such portrayals of the nation as a land of leisure and of the Brazilian people—the diversity of its citizens notwithstanding—as laid-back hedonists are homogenizing nonetheless. These often misguided renderings of Brazil and Brazilian culture in the American imaginary draws heavily on a very narrow set of cultural practices, traditions and national pastimes, ultimately overlooking a cultural texture that, according to Amanda, is no less authentic. “That’s not the only Brazil,” she proclaims, “I mean, Valadares is Brazil, too. It’s just as Brazilian.” As Darièn J. Davis, professor of Latin American history at Middlebury College, asserts in his essay entitled Before We Called this Place Home, the American film and music industries “have always been fascinated with the exotic”; yet, “more often than not this interest has not been a healthy desire to learn about the other but rather it has led to the appropriation and transformation of a foreign culture into static images for entertainment, without allowing it to serve as an example of that culture’s dynamism.”290 These “static images” are those to which Amanda feels she must appeal in the setting of college interviews and in writing personal statements, for her dynamic vision and understanding of Brazil is not one that is widely shared by American media consumers. In effect, the “difference” that has such value in the context of the college admissions process is an imagined difference and more importantly, one that is fabricated by an American taste for the exotic. Hence, to present oneself to an admissions officer as Brazilian is, as Amanda argues, a “sticky situation.” “On the one hand,” she continues, “I want to show what it means for me to be Brazilian. Like, I want to show them that I’m not just from Brazil but that I’m from Governador Valadares and that I’m not just a football fan but that I’m an E.C.D. (Esporte Clube Democrata) fan. At the same time though, I feel like Americans don’t know or don’t really care about that Brazil. So when I interviewed for colleges and wrote all those

essays for the Common App., I had to dumb it down a little, I guess. I had to be *their* kind of Brazilian.”

Thus, cultural difference has value. It can be deployed, emphasized or hidden for a wide range of purposes and in a variety of contexts. Reciprocally, different activities and cultural contexts demand different degrees of difference. Yet, *unlimited* difference, as my informants almost univocally assert, is not always acceptable, particularly in the context of the college admissions system. “You can’t be *too* different,” says Beatrice, “Then they might think you won’t fit in or you won’t gel with the school’s spirit. You have to fit in and be different *at the same time.* Weird, right? You have to play the part they want you to play, you know? You have to be *reasonably different.*” Difference has a privileged but circumscribed role in institutional structures of power. Indeed, the college admissions system, as a technique for the selection and eventual reproduction of particular “subjects,” reflects a regulatory regime of power-knowledge which subscribes to certain stereotypical representations of “cultural identity” and thus extends to my informants a script, the successful emulation of which may afford them a precious advantage over other applicants. For Tiabe whose Brazilian genealogy is localized in and around Rio de Janeiro, a city which, according to Davis, has a certain “cultural hegemony” over depictions of Brazil in the American media, this normalizing criteria of judgment is more conspicuous. In fact, Tiabe felt as though he might “disappoint” his college interviewer by failing to approximate hegemonic American interpretations of Brazilian culture.

I thought maybe he was disappointed or something. When I said I was Brazilian he asked me, ‘Where from?’, and I said, ‘Well my mother grew up in Rio.’ He seemed confused. I guess he had this mental image of what Brazilians look like and act like, and I’m just this skinny kid with glasses. Not really the kind of Brazilian he was expecting, I guess.²⁹¹

The college admissions process thus represents a political economy of “reasonable” difference, a peculiar system of social and cultural capital which, when

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properly deployed, reinforces an institutional regime that rewards and often valorizes
difference, while simultaneously employing stereotypes and certain cultural assumptions
to set the limits and terms of that difference. Beyond those boundaries, difference
becomes unreasonable, off-putting, and irreconcilable with a particular brand of
heterogeneity that still appeals to highly positional standards of judgment. All of my
informants have submitted themselves to these regulatory strategies and have performed,
to varying degrees, the scripts of “cultural identity” that render social and cultural
experiences redeemable within institutional structure.

To suggest, however, that colleges, universities, and comparable institutions of
higher learning operate as hegemonic regulatory regimes for the constructing and
policing of “cultural identity,” demand that we examine other systems of cultural power-
knowledge which work, in Beatrice’s words, “closer to home.” Indeed, parents and
relatives – which is to say, the family – also play a significant role in defining the the
contours and limits of “cultural identity,” furnishing my informants with another set of
scripts likewise represented as “authentic.” As opposed to institutional mobility, the apt
approximation of scripts generated by domestic regimes of power-knowledge afford
social inclusion and confer certain advantages within kinship structures, rendering
accessible discrete forms of social capital redeemable only in that context. Whereas
academic institutions may encourage the emulation of certain stereotypes, these other
scripts may oblige linguistic fluency, frequent visits to family abroad, or participation in
cultural activities and practices deemed “authentic,” employing an alternative schema of
“authenticity” as the touchstone for similarly normalizing judgment. For example,
Beatrice and Amanda both expressed concern for parental expectations of cultural
obligation and articulated, at various moments during our conversations, a preoccupation
with the limitations which they impose. Beatrice, for example, bemoans her parents’
insistence that she “come home for every feijoada and…watch Globo…or care about
Brazilian politics” and oftentimes interprets these imperatives as restrictive. Amanda
perceives a similar injunction to have been the cause of her “falling out” with friends and
family after graduating from middle school and moving to private high school dominated
by a white student body. With respect to this period of alleged ostracism, she claims, “the

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worst part was feeling like a stranger to [her] parents and losing [her] authority in the Youth Ministry.” Her disregard for the regulations of a particular cultural script, seems to have exposed the boundaries of social inclusion and the limits of “authentic” cultural identity. Of course, not all parents so stringently manage their children’s unfolding Brazilian-American identities. Anselmo, for example, feels little obligation to “speak Portuguese in the house or care much about Brazilian politics” as his mother does not demand, explicitly or implicitly, that he engage with these elements of Brazilian culture and national affairs. Nevertheless, Anselmo finds himself embedded in a transnational kinship network that extends far beyond his front door, connected, however tenuously, to relatives in Brazil for whom these cultural practices, particularly linguistic aptitude, may serve as powerful indices of “authenticity.” In fact, Anselmo suffers a degree of social ostracism as a result of his failure to perform appropriate cultural scripts and is labeled as a “gringo,” facetious teasing that conceals tacit normative judgments. Even Tiabe, whose parents seldom demand his participation in cultural activities or insist that he maintain frequent correspondence with family members abroad, senses the coercion of the cultural scripts generated by relatives and family friends. In our more recent conversations, we reminisced briefly about our first encounter, at the uproarious Dia da Independencia festival, and Tiabe explained, recalling our mutual distaste for sertaneja music, that “even though [he] is supposed to like that stuff, sometimes [he] feels like [he] needs a break.” That Tiabe refers explicitly to such an imperative – that he ought to enjoy sertaneja music – arguably reflects the nefarious workings of cultural scripts produced not just in domestic sphere but perhaps also by a transnational Brazilian community, that may likewise permit or deny social inclusion. Indeed, both Tiabe and I experienced a subtle social effacement as a result of our non-participation in this effervescent collective expression of common cultural identity, relegated to the periphery of the garrulous crowd. Thus, scripts that legitimate particular behaviors, tastes, practices and attitudes as culturally “authentic” precipitate from multiple sources and different regulatory regimes, some institutional, some domestic, and still others forged within discrete social networks.

Interestingly, amongst the manifold representations of “authentic” cultural identity which my informants confront as they move between these domains of power, no single script is discernibly hegemonic. Although the renderings of Brazil and Brazilian
culture in American media imagery are easily identifiable, for the most part, as the 
products of exoticism, my informants do not explicitly associate cultural “authenticity” 
with a dominant script. When I asked Beatrice, for example, which representation of 
Brazil she considered “authentic” her response was strikingly ambivalent. “I don’t…I’m 
not sure,” she said hesitantly. “I don’t think there is one. I don’t think there’s like this one 
real Brazil. That kind of talk sounds so old.” Here, Beatrice’s remarks not only reiterate 
her neutrality with respect to cultural “authenticity” but also suggests that she associates 
such ontological arguments with an older generation. As a young Brazilian-American, 
Beatrice perceives the rhetoric of cultural “authenticity” as orthodox and contraining, 
later adding that “you don’t have to eat feijao and arroz every night or, like, speak 
Portuguese perfectly to be Brazilian.” Despite the attempts of alternative systems of 
cultural knowledge and power to dictate the limits of her cultural identity, Beatrice 
remains convinced that subjectivity, even with respect to culture, is something more fluid 
and unfixed. Even Amanda, who so emphatically referred to Governador Valadares as 
“her Brazil,” conceded that “being Brazilian has meant a lot of different things to [her] at 
different times in [her] life” and acknowledged the equal legitimacy of all her “identity 
experiments,” specifying that “no one [way of being Brazilian] is better.” Despite the 
contextual authority of certain scripts, Amanda is similarly resistant to admit the 
“authenticity” of a single “way of being Brazilian,” which is to say, the hegemony of a 
single script for cultural identity.

Nevertheless, the incongruous scripts of multiple regimes of identity 
management, of cultural “authenticity” rendered through the lens of many cultural logics, 
make the negotiations of their inconsistent demands and contextual authority more 
difficult. My informants expressed nearly unanimous vexation and anxiety with respect to 
their uncomfortable location at the intersection of numerous systems of pedagogical 
cultural knowledge. Beatrice, for example, called attention to frequent feelings of 
confusion when returning to her home in Watertown during school vacations, visits 
which required that she “get used to how Brazilian [her] parents are again.”294 She 
explained that her father frequently entertains, inviting “his Brazilian friends” over for 

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coffee or lunch, and expects Beatrice to socialize and “act super Brazilian.”  Amanda articulates a similar dilemma. "Sometimes it's hard, know you,” she said, “Like my parents want me to be this kind of Brazilian - I mean like all the tradition and my "roots," but like, that's not how my friends are. I love my parents but sometimes they can be so...old fashioned. Sometimes they ask me, straight up, when I'm gonna find a Brazilian boyfriend!" Here, Amanda demonstrates more clearly the troublesome tension between the cultural identity she performs amongst friends and the demands of scripts produced within a politics of nostalgia that associate “authentic” cultural identity with certain kinship obligations such as the imperative to maintain the cultural continuity of a family line. Another comment of Amanda’s serves to reiterate this pressure, particularly with respect to the behavior and cultural practice that those domestically generated scripts demand. As was always the case with Amanda, she insisted that we meet for coffee and we spoke of our parents, telling stories that provoked a curious solidarity between us: our mutual grievances against their overbearing tendencies seemed to elicit a new sort of camaraderie. Amanda’s parents, like my own, emphasize the importance of going to Brazil, and more importantly, enjoying it.

My parents are really strict, I mean really Brazilian. That kind of Brazilian. When I was around thirteen I went through a phase where I just didn’t want to go to Brazil. I thought, That place sucks. I don’t want to be there. I don’t care. They’ve always pushed me to. They say “you have to go...there’s no way you’re staying here.” I would state my case once, and my mom would say “no,” and I knew that that was the end of it because...you know, if I just said that I didn’t want to go to visit my mom’s parents she would be really upset. So I would’ve just dropped it. I would go anyway, and pretend to have a good time and even though I would be miserable. I’m not sure if she saw through me, or if I was convincing. And when we got back to the States it would be a relief but...at least I did what I had to do.  

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Tiabe’s response to a similarly disorganized scripts for “authentic” cultural identity is more radical. He explains that he is “not really worried about being ‘authentic’.” In fact, Tiabe expressed great distaste for the term “authentic” and the concept of cultural authenticity, calling it “limiting” and even “oppressive,” mistaking my interest in matters of “cultural authenticity” for a pedagogical agenda. After assuring Tiabe that my curiosity was not concealing partisanship, he explained, his momentary skepticism more or less assuaged, that “because there are so many ways of being Brazilian, [he] feels more relaxed about being ‘authentic,’ whatever that really means.” He is more concerned with exploring cultural horizons than with sifting through disjunctive representations of cultural authenticity, an attitude that seems consistent with his appetite for language learning (see Chapter IV, Fun With Words). He proclaims with particular gusto, “I don’t have time to worry about being this or that kind of Brazilian, you know? I’ve got places to go, people to meet.” He inflated his chest and rested the side of his hand atop his brow so as to appear like an explorer gazing into the distance, towards foreign shores. “Plus,” he deflated with a belabored exhale, “why would I want to spend so much energy worrying about being…what was the word you used? Right! ‘Authentic’.” He made certain to remind me that he detests the rhetoric of authenticity by wrinkling his nose, as though a stench was in the air, and after this brief pantomime, added, “Like, I’m going to Japan after I graduate. I should care more about learning [about] Japanese culture than about whether I’m really Brazilian or not.” Again, Tiabe’s comments call attention to his burgeoning cosmopolitan identity: having contemplated the gamut scripts for cultural authenticity, dictated to him by competing social and institutional systems of power/knowledge, he has chosen instead, with visible satisfaction, to perform outside the limits of incoherent normative spectrums and thus has challenged their attempts to circumscribe him. This is, however, a risky enterprise, and Tiabe acknowledges the stakes of his subversive cosmopolitan attitude. “I get that I might, like, have to make some sacrifices, you know? Like I might lose touch with some people in Brazil after school. But it’s worth it, I think.” He is committed to his cultural explorations, perhaps even at the price of marginality.

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Amanda is less comfortable than Tiabe at the ambiguous intersection of multiple cultural logics of “authenticity.” A comment she made in passing, just as we moved on from our discussion of cultural authenticity to other subjects, seems to best capture the sense of subjective aporia that such a plethora of authenticities engenders. “Sometimes,” the cadence of her voice slowed considerably, as if the words that followed would themselves be cumbersome, “I get jealous of my white friends. They don’t have to deal with this stuff, you know? It seems so simple for them.” Amanda thus testifies to the anxiety of negotiating overlapping representations of cultural “authenticity” as she attempts to articulate an identity on her own terms, a predicament by which her “white friends” are unencumbered. Anselmo also feels beset on all sides by incompatible scripts; but, unlike my other informants, all of whom attempt to navigate these interstices on their own terms, Anselmo cannot chart a course through the storm. Perhaps this explains why he takes such pleasure in the anonymity of university life. He explains that academia affords him the opportunity to “be invisible.” “Here [on campus],” a grin crept across his face, “no one knows that I’m Brazilian, so I don’t really have to act a certain way.”

Anselmo makes a crucial observation. Insofar as they represent the interests of certain regulatory regimes, cultural scripts facilitate the control and management of subjectivity by making individuals visible or identifiable within discrete discursive systems or “networks of writing.” Scripts function, in other words, to locate or situate individuals on a spectrum of normal behavior or activity codified in discourse, and thus to produce subjects who properly emulate a desired identity.

Interestingly, this notion of “authentic” identity as produced through the emulation of discursive “truths” – a system of scrutiny made particularly explicit in the context of the college admissions system - may throw the malleability of identity itself into stark relief. Because the conditions of cultural authenticity so explicitly require that one “act a certain way,” my informants seem unanimously skeptical of cultural identity as something essential or immutable as opposed to something that one contextually performs. In fact, the rhetoric of performance permeates my informant’s commentaries,

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and though all four have responded differently to the contextual demands of the various scripts of “authentic” cultural identity, all refer explicitly to these negotiations as performative.

Here, theories of performative gender constitution, particularly the work of Judith Butler, help clarify how precisely identity can be understood as a series of gestures and articulations rather than something fixed or essential that precedes action of any kind. In conclusion of her book Gender Trouble, Butler asserts, in opposition to “the foundationalist reasoning of identity politics [which] tends to assume that an identity must first be in place in order for…action to be taken”302, that “the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed.”303 For Butler, identity is constituted by “a signifying practice” and thus “gender” and “sexuality” can be appropriately recast as performances. Thus there is no “performer prior to performance,” no “cogito [that is] fully of the cultural world that it negotiates.”304 Such a framework for understanding identity also serves to illustrate the extent to which performance is never an articulation of complete agency, but rather unfolds always under duress, always within “rule-bound discourse” that does not determine but rather regulates this processes of subjective repetition. Butler, in her own theoretical lexicon, calls attention to discursive scripts that manage the limits of performance, describing identity as “a resulting effect of rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life.”305 It is precisely this unstable negotiation of identity, performance that confronts discursively defined limits, that my informants often confront. Butler’s work thus offers a theoretical point of departure for understanding how my informants not only perform, but are compelled to perform.

Amanda asserts that, during college interviews, she felt compelled to be a certain kind of Brazilian and elsewhere makes reference to this decision as a kind of “acting.” So too does Beatrice conceptualize her own cultural identity as a performance of sorts, for in describing the college application process as an exercise in “selling herself” she suggests that particular techniques of performing, or rather, the performance of particular scripts,
may confer important benefits upon an applicant who is prepared to perform them *aptly*. Moreover, she later argues that what admissions officers “*really* want” is for prospective college students to “play their parts.” Of course, given the depth of ethnographic data available, such a claim is not here verifiable: the machinery of the college admissions system is rendered interpretable only through my informants’ perception of the apparatus itself. This ethnographic exercise, in other words, can do to little to *confirm* the logic of this particular system of power-knowledge, at least beyond what can be gleaned from each of informant’s commentary. The normalizing schema of the college admissions systems remains more or less tenebrous. Nevertheless, Beatrice feels the expectations of cultural scripts at work and senses a provocation to certain “play a role,” particularly in graduate school application interviews. Performing cultural identity *deliberately* proves to be a valuable strategy for negotiating the system of social and cultural capital that guards the gates of academia. For both Amanda and Beatrice, cultural identity is similarly performative in the domestic sphere: the former “humors” her parents by feigning interest in marriage and “making up” stories of romantic trysts with Brazilian boys, while the latter indulges her father by “[acting] super Brazilian” when Brazilian guests visit their home. Tiabe also acknowledges the extent to which Brazilian-American identity is performable, but does so by flirting with limits of performativity, interrogating the system of normative assumptions and stereotypes through which performance is regulated by cultural boundaries. Tiabe refuses to perform scripts he finds “oppressive.”

Alternatively, Anselmo fails to perform aptly the scripts generated by various regimes of power-knowledge, and finds solace in liminal institutional spaces in which his cultural identity is invisible, as though he were more comfortable off stage. This perhaps explains his decision to omit his cultural identity as a point of reference in college essays and personal statements, fearful that admissions offices might “call his bluff.” Thus, my informants not only engage in performative politics of representation but are *hyper* aware of this engagement, conscious always of their location at a hub of multiple systems of cultural power and knowledge.

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However, theories of performative gender constitution may prove less effective at providing an account of the hyper awareness of performativity that my informants express. Butler herself concedes that such a theory of identity is “difficult to accept” and that there is always the “appearance of a “subject.” Identity masquerades as something prior to performance, but must be consistently repeated to afford such an illusion of priority. Thus, to understand identity as performance entails a degree of ambiguity, a measure of submission to the contingency of being that the appears authentic. This is precisely the ambiguity of which my informants seem intensely aware. They articulate in their commentary the sense that one is only to the extent that one performs, without capitulating completely the power to the illusion of integrity. Interestingly, the ruse of priority that Butler describes – the appearance of an authentic, pre-discursive subject – is less convincing for my informants, if not completely artificial.

Perhaps this hyperawareness of performance arises because the negotiations of cultural identity that my informants experience represent a constant enunciation of inconsistent scripts, and thus performance itself becomes difficult, if not impossible, to ignore. Butler certainly accounts for the contingency of identity; in fact, identity understood as performance is necessarily contingent. However, Butler seems less concerned with the possibility that the “rule-bound discourse” which compels an individual to perform a given identity may shift from moment to moment. In the context of gender identity and discourses that define its limits, certain masculinities and femininities are discernibly hegemonic. There are, in other words, dominant scripts of performance that tend to eclipse alternative modes of “doing gender.” In the context of my informants’ tricky location at the intersection of multiple cultural scripts, it proves more difficult to locate a single representation of “authentic” cultural identity that has overwhelming authority. As a result, the exploration of authenticity that is contextually

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309 As derived from the theory of “cultural hegemony” articulated in by Antonio Gramsci in “The Prison Notebooks” and applied by sociologist Raewyn Connell in the context of “masculinity” and taken up in the context of “femininity” by Deirdre Kelly, Shauna Pomerantz & Dawn Currie, in their study entitled “You Can Break So Many More Rules.”

defined and without recourse to a discernibly hegemonic discursive system may require alternative theoretical terms, and I find it helpful to consult the discipline of linguistics as well as further Foucauldian discourse analysis for guidance at this juncture.

**Mega-shifters and Discursive Categories**

Arguably, the “authentic” – insofar as this concept can signify countless contextual scripts as it travels through different discursive fields - operates within my informants’ cultural and national imaginaries much like Roman Jakobson’s *shifters* operate within systems of language. As Jakobson asserts in his essay “Shifters and Verbal Categories,” a shifter is a word that is tied directly to the context of its articulation and thus “cannot be defined without a reference to the message”\(^\text{310}\) in which it appears. In other words, a shifter assumes its meaning from situated use. The meaning of a shifter may therefore be augmented depending upon both the identity of the speaker and the object it describes. Indeed, it is precisely this quality of shifters – that they do not *code* but *may code* for a variety of meanings – which I observe as akin the “shifting” meanings of cultural “authenticity” that my informants have articulated. Mary Bucholtz submits the word “youth” to a similar linguistic analysis in her essay “Youth and Cultural Practice,” arguing that, as a shifter, “‘youth’ is a context-renewing and context-creating sign whereby social relations are both (and often simultaneously) reproduced and contested.”\(^\text{311}\) The same might be said of the manifold symbolic representations of Brazil and Brazilian culture that my informants so often confront as “authentic.” Rather than social relations, what is arguably “reproduced and contested” are “authentic” cultural scripts.

There is, however, a crucial difference between signs, understood traditionally as “signifier” and “signified,” and terms like “youth” or “authenticity:” the latter “sound-images” more often invoke whole systems or “clusters” of signs, than they do singular concepts.\(^\text{312}\) To speak of “authenticity,” for example, is rarely to speak of a single quality

\(^{312}\) Saussure. *Course in General Linguistics.*
or gesture that renders something or someone “authentic.” Rather, a *multiplicity* of qualities or a *series* of gestures more often constitutes “authenticity,” and perhaps this is why the term “script” is most appropriate for describing the particular performances that “authenticity” demands. Unlike signs per se, “authenticity” represents a *schema* of traits, tastes, behaviors and activates which fall within a particular discursive domain and together constitute an object, action or person as “authentic.” Foucault refers to such sign “clusters” more broadly as “fields of discursivity,” a notion he elaborates in his essay *What is an Author?*, in an attempt to understand how particular authors, or rather, author *functions* engender or “initiate” domains discourse. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, for Foucault, “initiate” fields of discursivity that bear their names and are thus limited in content insofar as they are closely associated with their originating authorial voices. Initiators of discursivity, he asserts, “make possible a certain number of analogies but also a certain number of differences” and thus to even utter the name “Marx” is to invoke this discursive field. In quite the same way, to utter the term “authenticity” is to invoke a field of discursivity that also allows certain analogies and differences, which is to say, a *schema* of traits, tastes, behaviors, etc. This conceptual leap is, however, highly problematic. As I have attempted to demonstrate through ethnographic analysis, “authenticity,” like Jakobson’s shifters, invokes a *particular* discursive field, in a *particular* context, by a *particular* voice. As my informants have articulated, “authentic” Brazilian culture is differently represented by nostalgic family members, in American media imagery and by institutions of high learning, which raises a difficult question: *How does one account for fields of discursivity that bear the same name but consist of different content and are subject to different limits? How does one, in other words, account for fields of discursivity that “shift”?*

It may prove helpful to borrow briefly from the work of Naoki Sakai, a scholar of comparative literature and Asian studies, who articulates how fields of discursivity of this kind “shift,” in the Jakobsonian sense. He refers to the terms that represent such fields as “mega-shifters” and uses “the West” as a prime example of such a metaphysical

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structure. The crucial element in conceiving “mega-shifters” is, for Sakai, “translation” which makes possible their deployment by a variety of voices, in a variety of discursive contexts. What arises is arguably an overabundance of mega-shifters, a surplus of discursive fields – each with its unique cluster of signs, its “analogies” and “differences” – but that operate under the same heading, “the West.” Like a shifter, “the West” represents a conceptual category that is simultaneously defined by the context of its articulation - the “voice” of its invocation - and provides an index for the nature of the context in which it is invoked. Sakai thus offers a means repurposing Jakobson’s linguistic theory and applying it, now unmoored from its formalist underpinnings, at the level of discursive systems rather than individual signs. The resulting maelstrom of meaning is, needless to say, overwhelming. One could imagine Foucault’s vexation upon finding “Marx” translated into many different languages and uttered by many different voices and thus suddenly representative of a multiplicity of discursive fields. Perhaps, my informants face a similarly complex dilemma as they wrestle with the disjunctive meanings of a different “mega-shifter” altogether: cultural “authenticity” invokes different schemata of traits, tastes, behavior or, in other words, scripts depending on the context of its invocation. As a result, they face a confusing negotiation that indexes their problematic location at the intersection of different cultural discourses. In this case, however, the discursive authorities or, in Foucault’s terminology, the “initiators of discursivity” are nations, media, and domestic structure, to name a few. These are the “authorial” voices that compete for precedence over what “authenticity” represents. Thus, my informants experience the proliferation of cultural meaning in its translation from generative voice to generative voice, and a superabundance of performable cultural scripts insofar as they are framed by fields of discursivity that perpetually shift.

More importantly, (mega)-shifters may be deployed in certain contexts more frequently than others, but alternative invocations remain always a possibility. For example, Sakai’s paradigmatic meg-shifter, “the West,” may be more frequently deployed in the context of Western literature and thus the category itself may more frequently entail a given set of “analogies” and “differences”; however, “the West” can

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and increasingly is invoked by non-Western literature, in which case the category derives a host of new, probably less flattering, discursive content. Likewise, certain schemes of cultural “authenticity” may acquire prestige or privilege, but alternative representations and the scripts they entail are never completely effaced. Though my informants, particularly Amanda and Beatrice, may more frequently oblige representations of authentic Brazilian culture and identity generated by their parents’ politics of nostalgia, they may nevertheless perform scripts deriving from marginal sources, such as American exoticism, as is contextually empowering. In other words, as my informants move between systems of cultural power, so too do the discursive fields associated with “authenticity” change without one or another version of “authenticity” becoming hegemonic. As a result, the very notion of “authenticity” – that which is essential - becomes difficult, if not impossible, to pin down, just as gleaning the essential meaning of any shifter or mega-shifter proves unfeasible without locating it within the context of an utterance or a field of discourse.

This surplus of “authenticities” can also be explored from an alternative vantage point. Provided that the various authorities – media sources, institutions, family etc. - that constitute various discursive fields of “authenticity” together create an abundance of scripts, the modes of identity that my informants perform are likewise myriad. A surplus of “authenticities,” in other words, engenders a surplus of scripts for identity as performance. As the discursive field associated with “authenticity” shifts, my informants’ performances of cultural identity change accordingly. In the context of a college interview, “authentic” Brazilian identity may entail a particularly “styled” performance that has absolutely no credibility in context of domestic life. Thus, from the perspective of the subject who stands at the intersection of many cultural discourses and therefore many cultural scripts, the “illusion” of a pre-discursive subject that Butler describes seems even more untenable. This amplified awareness of identity performance is perhaps best articulated by Beatrice, who observed that “to get by, you need to know what kind of Brazilian to be and when.” Amanda expressed a similar alertness to the many identities she can perform as “Brazilian” when, reflecting on her college interviews, she explained that “[she] had to be their kind of Brazilian.” Such a multiplicity of performances may, however, constitute a distinct dilemma: coherent, stable cultural “identity” may never
“appear” coherent. The cultural self imagined as a series of articulations, with recourse to many different scripts, is perhaps more ephemeral than even Butler acknowledges.

Indeed, Amanda claims that her Brazilian-American identity has “[meant] different things at different times in her life,” perhaps demonstrating how the consolidation of cultural scripts has been indefinitely deferred. Though she has more recently found subjective constancy in her work for the Paroquia Santo Antonio’s Youth Ministry, she nervously awaits her departure for university precisely because such a significant “change of scenery” may herald problematic transformations of cultural identity as performance, perhaps at the expense of social inclusion in her transnational community. Likewise, for Tiabe, a sense of cultural identity remains somewhat mercurial, zigzagging between different identifications and roaming the peripheries of multiple cultural scripts. Unlike Amanda, his interstitial cultural exploration is not, however, cause for anxiety, but rather provokes a further, more intense desire to embed himself in alternative cultural logics and apprehend diverse cultural knowledge. He seems comfortable in undecided subjective space. For my informants, identity itself, insofar as it constitutes a series of gestures, articulations and stylized performances, may “shift” sporadically, constantly reorienting its mode of articulation based on contextual indicators without recourse to any hegemonic representation of “authenticity.” The subjective interstice that my informants navigate can therefore be understood as a superabundance of cultural meaning from two perspectives: an array of cultural discourses, precipitating from multiple cultural authorities, furnish my informants with a superabundance of scripts which, in turn, renders performable equally diverse modes of identity. Tiabe cogently captured the erratic endeavor of navigating this interstitial zone of subjectivity as he wiped bits of soggy burrito from his shirt: “It’s like, being Brazilian means one thing one second and another thing the next! It gets confusing! So what the hell do you do?!”

In order to more fully explore this uncertain experience of cultural identity, it may prove here advantageous to invoke the work of post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, for he observes a development of interstitial subjectivity in his theorizing of post colonial hybridity. Calling attention to the tendency of nations to treat their subjects as

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"historic objects" in “national narratives” and to represent cultural identity as "pre-given traits" fixed within "[tablets] of tradition," Bhabha flirts with an exposition of post-colonial subjectivity that locates cultural identity at the intersection of “representationalist discourse” and individual performance. In theorizing the ideological influence of such discourses of cultural pedagogy, the Foucauldian concept of “discursivity” is fundamental for Bhabha, for whom “pedagogical representations” or “narratives” of nation and culture are not unlike Foucault’s “fields of discursivity,” deriving from the nation as an author of sorts and providing scripts for cultural identity performance. Unlike Foucault, Bhabha more fully acknowledges the performative element of cultural identity as constantly in tension with these narratives, “as a process of signification that erases any prior or originary presence.” This is, perhaps, why Bhabha refers to this precarious location of cultural subjectivity as an “interstitial perspective.”

I assert that my informants are likewise situated at a hub of intense pedagogical representation and constant performance, a cultural interstice wherein culture itself always “takes place” on uncertain terms. Yet, as I have endeavored to demonstrate throughout my ethnographic work, the “interstice” that my informants experience may be even more complex than Bhabha himself acknowledges. That national and cultural narratives may be myriad and inconsistent – not only in their interpretation but also in their articulation - Bhabha seems to acknowledge only momentarily, and returns periodically to "the nation" as the paradigmatic generator of an origin myth. As the testimonies of my informants demonstrate, however, accounts of cultural authenticity, though some may prove more convincing than others, are undeniably manifold and generated by different systems of power. More importantly, none achieve the pride of...
place or sacred status of a founding myth. For my informants, pedagogical representations of nation and culture shift contextually, and thus, the national and cultural narratives of which Bhabha speaks only momentarily serve as points of reference for my informants. As a result, the performative element of cultural identity may be similarly complex, insofar as the scripts which such pedagogical narratives provide are only contextually coherent and thus the performance of cultural identity is subject to more rapid “shifts” in style.

How can we come to better understand the performative element of identity as it proceed from this particularly unstable and uncertain interstice? Even Butler, who provides an excellent means of conceptualizing the contingency of identity understood as performance, may no longer provide the terms necessary for articulating how cultural identity, without recourse to a dominant narrative or hegemonic script, represents a uniquely slippery mode of performativity. However, the national and cultural spaces in which second generation immigrants engage with this complicated process of self making bears striking resemblance to the complex post colonial “world” – real and imagined - from which Bhabha's expanded notion of hybrid identity emerges. Post colonial studies may therefore provide a set of preliminary theoretical terms for understanding the modalities of cultural identity performance that precipitate from the peculiar and problematic location of second generation immigrants at the intersection of many “regimes of truth” or “representationalist discourses,” that is, from an interstice.

Multiple Mimicries

The conditions that engender the performative negotiations of cultural identity that my informants employ – the juggling of multiple cultural scripts – bears striking resemblance to those that provoke what Bhabha terms mimicry. Indeed, mimicry is itself a mode of performance. Bhabha introduces this concept in an essay entitled Of Mimicry and Man as a means of articulating the particular phenomenon whereby members of colonized societies imitate various elements of their colonizer’s culture – i.e. language, dress, social customs, politics etc. – and is explained, at least in its preliminary stages, as
both a “strategy of colonial power and knowledge”\(^\text{321}\) and the “double vision”\(^\text{322}\) of those whom Bhabha refers to as “the not quite/not white.”\(^\text{323}\) That is to say, the colonized subject mimics the cultural practices of his colonizer and in so doing attempts to emulate his power. But why precisely does such a theory prove useful for understanding the performative cultural identities of second generation immigrants and the interstitial subjective space from which these enunciations emerge? I argue that, despite the disparity in historical circumstances, the phenomenon whereby my informants perform certain cultural scripts – and therefore indulge certain representations of cultural “authenticity” and their respective discourses – constitutes a similarly mimetic gesture and reflects a similar consciousness in the “mimic-[wo]man.” While my informants and the subaltern grand-children of the colonial enterprise may be “worlds apart” – although they are both arguably members of a “second generation” and inherit a world more complex perhaps than their forbears’ – the circumstances of their self making are alike in several ways.

The role of power in Bhabha’s theory of mimicry is of paramount importance. What Bhabha attempts to articulate in focusing on the colonized subjects’ approximation of colonial authority is the particular nature of the mimetic performance which constitutes a certain ambivalence, in the mind of the colonized, with regards to his colonizer and vice versa. For this reason, “mimic-men” are often portrayed, particularly in post-colonial literature, as opportunists who artfully conceal their cultural identity in service of upward social mobility. Consequently, this phenomenon, and those who engage in its pantomime, have historically invited an array of smarting critiques, the fiercest of which are arguably found in the work of Franz Fanon, for whom the act of “sickening mimicry”\(^\text{324}\) forms the basis of a misguided endeavor that jeopardizes the autonomy of cultural identity. Fanon aptly identifies mimicry as the result of a particularly nefarious technique of Western domination that entices colonized populations to don “white masks.” Yet, the cleverly concealed contradiction of mimicry as a strategy of colonial power – what Bhabha refers


\(^{322}\) Ibid., pg. 338.

\(^{323}\) Ibid., pg. 342.

to as the “ironic compromise” — is that the mobility the mimetic gesture or the “white mask” affords is controlled and capped by colonial discourse. Mimicry certainly represents a performance on the part of the colonial subject, but it may also function as a method for producing a particular colonized subject. Colonial administrations desire in Bhabha’s words, a “reformed and recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite”: the exemplary colonized subject is “not quite/not white.” This is the crux of mimicry, understood as an emulation of colonial power and knowledge, and perhaps the first element of the phenomenon that resembles my informants’ own experience and activities, particularly their tryst with the college admissions system. Of course, the second generation Brazilians with whom I crafted this ethnography are certainly not “colonized” in the sense that Bhabha uses this term; yet, the price of admission to institutions of higher learning (among many others) is a similar mimetic gesture that also constitutes an “ironic compromise.” My informants are furnished by academic institutions with a cultural script, a schema that describes desired cultural traits and attitudes, which if performed aptly may secure admission. Akin to Bhabha’s “mimic-man,” who likewise seeks “admission” to his colonizer’s privileged milieu, my informants are provoked to perform a cultural identity that is recognizably different: an Americanized representation of how Brazilians ought to behave. The difference they articulate under the panoptic vision of institutional structure must fit within its discourse and must be reconcilable with its ideology. Of course, this discourse, which sets the terms of the cultural script my informants perform, is not so explicitly subjugating as the one that perpetuates colonial domination. Nevertheless, their situation is not altogether dissimilar from the one faced by the colonized subject striving for inclusion in the Western world: my informants also play the part of the “reformed Other” in a system of redeemable distinction and sameness. Their “mask” may not be “white,” but is nevertheless similarly coded by a system of power-knowledge that has in mind an “ideal” Other, and determines what such an “ideal” entails. Thus, the “ideals” presented to the colonized subject and to my informants, though entirely different with regards to historical context, share this in common: both are scripts fabricated by and for the

325 Bhabha. The Location of Culture. pg. 122.
326 Ibid.
dominant figure, institution and administration in an exchange which allows only an “interdictory otherness.”  

However, other, differently styled mimetic gestures are observable elsewhere in my informants’ commentary. Interestingly, they “mimic” in the context of alternative iterations of “authenticity” and indulge their discursive limitations and enticements. Indeed, I have attempted to demonstrate how these young Brazilian-Americans are located at the intersection of multiple discourses of cultural “authenticity” and thus their mimicry, if their performance of scripts can be understood as such, are multiple. My informants’ parents, relatives and friends generate cultural scripts that also present an “ideal” and consequently manage the possibility of their children’s divergence from a perceived “authentic” Brazilian culture, demanding another series of subjective emulations. While the performance of domestically generated scripts may be less clearly linked to “power” in the sense that Bhabha speaks of mimicry in the context of the colonial world, this brand of mimicry likewise subscribes to an economy or logic of difference. In this case, however, a subject of difference “that is almost the same, but not quite” is not explicitly desirable (the logic of colonial discourse) but rather permissible: parents of second generation immigrants, as Amanda and Beatrice have described, may allow their children to engage with elements of American culture in the process of identity formation only to the extent that this integration is reconcilable with cultural practices and social responsibilities that are, in their minds, “authentically” Brazilian. In the domestic sphere, or rather, in the context of the domestic system of cultural power-knowledge, the “ironic compromise” is subject to an inversion: differences of other kinds are allowed and prohibited in the context of family relations. Therefore, in both domestic and institutional settings, mimicry or the apt reading or “acting out” of a cultural script represented as “authentic” is demanded, more or less coercively. More importantly, in both cases, repetition is obligatory: the script of each emulation or mimetic gesture is never “achieved” but rather repeated contextually. In other worlds, scripts are never encompassed completely by their readers, if only because other, inconsistent scripts must be performed. 

327 Ibid.
328 Ibid., pg. 122.
Having drawn such a parallel between Bhabha’s characterization of mimicry and my informants’ performance of cultural scripts, and having expanded Bhabha’s theory slightly to account for the many scripts and fields of discourse by informants must perform and negotiate, I wish to call attention to another way that mimicry can be “read.” Though, this performance is most often construed as opportunism, Bhabha insists that the mimetic gesture may also interrogate the authority of colonial discourse itself, a subtle “recalcitrance which coheres to the dominant strategic function of colonial power” only to reveal its discursive truths as artificial. This observation represents a decisive theoretical leap and offers another, more illuminating application of Bhabha’s theory to my own ethnographic work: Mimicry, as a performative subversion, the calls into question the coherence of Western culture as an “ideal,” Similarly, my informants’ emulation of multiple scripts, though not necessarily seditious, likewise reveals the essentialist claims of each script – that they represent, accurately, the limits of “authentic” cultural identity – as a ruse. Reciprocally, cultural identity itself is revealed as performative process: not something essential, that which is about oneself, but rather, iterations that partake of different cultural schema and are repeated so as to appear essential.

Whether deployed as a subversive pantomime or strategy for upward mobility, what Bhabha renders plain is the limit of mimicry as provisional self-expression “a partial presence.” Indeed, mimicry takes aim at an impossible target. It is a [performative gesture, performance] that can never fully entail [its desired character, the character of its desire], an enunciation of identity that may creep into the ontological but never settles there. A becoming that never becomes. A becoming which, in its inability to become, reveals “identity” as always becoming. Similarly, second generation immigrants like my informants may be perpetually performing, always “reading” and “acting scripts. These readings, which are really renditions, are never indelible but are, as Bhabha elsewhere suggests, always “[erasing] any prior originary [cultural] presence.” Illocutionary force of this kind never ossifies but always dissipates in time. This is an undecidability that engenders its own mode of consciousness which Du Bois speaking

329 Ibid.
330 Ibid., pg. 126.
331 Ibid., pg. 208.
through Bhabha (or could it be the other way around?) calls “double” but is, for my informants, more of a multiplicity of consciousnesses. For they are not the children of two worlds, but rather the inheritors of many worlds, each already refracted and rendered visible only as interpretations and representations. The cultural “self” and cultural “identity,” insofar as it can be located in such a hall of mirrors, is always a single reflection among many, and always different – tilted, twisted this way and that – making the endeavor of apprehending the accurate, the “authentic” image a difficult undertaking. This is a position fraught with tension: Amanda and Beatrice juggle the contradictory scripts of friends and family. A location laden with uncertainty: Anselmo would rather melt into anonymity than challenge the confusion of performing identity. An interstice replete with unpredictability: who knows where Tiabe will “take place” next week, next month, next year? If this is the unstable subjective domain of second generation immigrants – youth delicately suspended at the interstice of many cultural narratives, discourses, and scripts – perhaps this ethnography and its guiding question are somewhat of a misfire. A false start.

Does transnationalism and transnationality persist generationally and how do we speak of its presence or absence, acknowledging simultaneously its relation to first generation transnationalism and its uniqueness from it? My informants elude the grasp of the question and render any single answer untenable. Having concluded my research, I find myself unable to venture a general response to such an inquiry that does not itself seem utterly provisional. My informants’ voices articulate many inconsistent accounts of “being” Brazilian-American, some of which may be familiar to transnational studies while others seem to fall outside its theoretical domain. What is clear, however, are the shortcomings of contemporary scholarship to address the multiplicity of emergent second generation identities and modes of cultural and national identification. Indeed, the predictions of the discipline’s foremost theorists and researchers tell a story that, for the purposes of my research, has narrow scope. In one possible narrative, second generation immigrants living in the United States integrate happily into American society at the expense of transnational social engagement and identity. Their felicitous assimilation spells doom for enduring ties with their ancestral homeland. The alternative narrative is more or less uneventful. In this tale, the second generation remains connected to their
parents’ country of origin, the transnational nexus faithfully preserved. This forecast is admittedly more of an oversight than an error. There may be second generation immigrants who “fit” these predictions and fall neatly into the predicted schema of development. What these thinkers may have overlooked is the peculiar complexity of the circumstances of cultural identity development and self expression amongst second generation immigrants, which is to say, the instability of their “interstitial perspective.” Whether approached through linguistic and discursive analysis or taken through the lens of post-colonial theories of identity performance, the lives of my informants seem saturated with cultural meaning and material which solidify only contextually. The subjective “undecidability” of these circumstances may create the conditions for the development of a field of possible cultural identities and fluid attachments among the sons and daughters of transnational immigrants, not all of which are easily definable as “transnationality.” In other words, if such an “undecidability” entails the contextual performance of various of cultural scripts, and thus many identities emerge from what Bhabha poignantly refers to as “the abyss of enunciation,” then further research on second generation immigrants in the United States may allow us to more fully explore the “abyss” itself. Moreover, systematizing the various “enunciations,” the numerous modes and styles of *doing* second generation identity, may prove to be a thornier endeavor than transnational studies has hitherto acknowledged. As to the implications of this challenge for my own work, answering the central question of this ethnography may therefore require approaching every ethnographic account individually, rather than attempting an exposition of a single mode of cultural identity and identity formation that includes all of these accounts in its scope. I have considered the tenuous commonalities between my informants’ experiences. What remains is an exploration of each.

*He is much different than I, my brother. He wears Brazil on his sleeve. Motifs of verde e amarelo dapple his wardrobe and he is quick to announce to all who might listen:* “I belong over there. I am a sojourner here, you can see by my shoes, with their miniature Brazilian flags. I never remove them because I am only a guest. I may not speak flawless Portuguese. But you need only listen to the sound of my voice, its timbre.

332 Ibid., pg. 220.
its texture to hear my heritage. I may have been born here, but that wasn't my choice." I am not so brazen as my brother. I am much less inclined to articulate my presence, here or there. Consequently, we are often at odds. He resents me for my reservation. I do not hold his exhibition in high esteem. But now my brother, four years my younger, faces a familiar task and my mother insists I offer him some insight, some guidance in writing his own essay. "Help your brother, will you André?" Though I am sure this endeavor will somehow end in fisticuffs, we will undoubtedly find a spit of common ground. "He has a rough draft, he only needs your input." I already have an inkling of its content, as though I have a read it once before. A simple question will suffice to confirm my suspicions, "Does he have an advisor? From school I mean." My mother nods. "He's upstairs now, working on the thing. Why don't you look over it right now?" I lumber up to my brother's room. My mother is too trusting but I am not, nor am I surprised to find him playing video games rather than diligently editing. He is glued to the wrong screen. "Mum told me I should help you with your essay. What are you writing about?" Flashing colors and deafening electronic sound are so overwhelming in their allure that he does not even turn his head. Or perhaps it is my question that does not deserve such recognition, for he answers only, "Guess." No need. I already know. He may wear sneakers with Brazilian flags, and I may wear wingtip oxfords with no excuse, but when it comes to writing college essays we are truly brothers. At least, we act that way. The working title of my brother’s essay sounds vaguely familiar.

“What Brazil Has Taught Me”
by Matheus Lima
Chapter VI

In Search of the Second Generation: Alternative Transnationalities

When Cassiano comes to visit, I can hardly get my father’s attention, let alone engage him in conversation. But this particular Saturday, as the two of them sat guffawing in the living room, a matter of great urgency suddenly arose and I needed to speak with my father at once. Some important information, in the form of an email, had just come to light, and though my father was preoccupied entertaining his friend, I could not wait indefinitely for a chance to convey my message. Yet, I found myself, as seems always to be the case when Cassiano shows up, lingering in the doorway, waiting impatiently for a moment to interject. They were discussing business, though I cannot imagine they ever get much accomplished since all they do is joke and chit chat. Their laughter echoes through the house. Cassiano is a large man with an even larger voice and has a predilection for joke telling. He came to the Untied States after many years of service in the Brazilian military, although his demeanor is not that of an army man. Indeed, there is nothing stoic about Cassiano. A crew cut, which he keeps immaculately groomed, seems to be the only vestige of his military service. Otherwise, his good nature and loquacious spirit make him a quite unconventional veteran, but an exemplary Brazilian, at least according to my father. While most Americans fixate on the effervescence of Carnival and the picturesque beaches of the Copa Cabana as indicative of a national appreciation for excess and relaxation, what Brazilians of my father’s generation seem to covet most is good company; the kind of company that stirs humorous spirits and obliterates time. Cassiano is precisely this kind of company. His presence heralds long hours of laughter and late nights of good cheer. As such, he is always welcome in my father’s house.

On this particular afternoon, however, I could not wait all night to speak with my father and whereas my natural timorousness would usually incline me to remain quietly by the periphery of his boisterous conversations with Cassiano until one of them took notice of my presence, I decided the circumstances warranted an interruption. Nevertheless, as I began to speak, their voices came to a crescendo and drowned out the sound of my own. At just that time, my mother, also roused by their cackling, came down
the front stairs and placing her hand softly on my shoulder so as not to startle me, half-whispered in my ear, “Are they at it again?” Giving a sigh and nodding, I decided that perhaps my cause was lost; but, determined at least to have my grievance heard, I turned my attention towards my mother instead. I began grumbling as I followed her to the kitchen. She spread the Sunday Times over the kitchen counter and scanned headlines lazily, while I protested my father’s inability to disengage, even for a moment, from his riotous dialogue with Cassiano. She barely acknowledged my vexation, and feeling snubbed, I stomped my foot, raised my voice and repeated myself in a more spiteful tone than before. Still, I could not provoke a response. Since she too seemed intent on ignoring me, I retreated, dragging my feet, to the entrance of the kitchen. I heard my mother stir as I approached the doorway. “Oh, André, you must give your father a break.” In her halfhearted attempt to console me, she did not look up from her newspaper. “He’s just being Brazilian.” This comment did nothing to assuage my irritation, for I am not my father, and I have seldom understood what being Brazilian actually entails.

Does transnationalism and transnationality persist generationally and how do we speak of its presence or absence, acknowledging simultaneously its relation to first generation transnationalism and its uniqueness from it? Returning to the question which precipitated this project, I find the answer to be more slippery than I had anticipated. Because I cannot reasonably claim that as American born Brazilians, Anselmo, Amanda, Beatrice and Taibe share a common orientation towards their ancestral homeland or a mutual sense of Brazilian-American identity, if I assert that one or the other amongst them is in fact “transnational,” I must account for the others. If the final task of this study is to discern how these second generation immigrants “fit” in a contemporary discourse of transnational studies, I must concede that few of them “fit” well, if at all. Because they refuse to be systematized, the project of finding a place for second generation immigrants within the theoretical domain of transnational studies becomes simultaneously an interrogation of the discipline's limits. I attempt, in what remains of this ethnography, to address each of my informants individually, to ask if and how they “fit,” and what it might mean for the future of transnational studies if they do not. Before proceeding with this final analysis, however, it is crucial that I return, if only briefly, to the terms set forth
at the outset of this exploration, in order that I remain faithful to the definition, albeit a
broad one, of “transnationalism” and “transnationality” which served as my theoretical
framework (though, as I have suggested, the boundaries of this framework are
increasingly the site of reinterpretation). I have heretofore employed “transnationalism”
and “transnationality” to refer, at different moments, to a social morphology that spans
borders, to a mode of cultural reproduction that blends elements of homeland and
hostland cultures, to a type of consciousness that is similarly hybridized in its reflection
on selfhood and belonging, and to one mode among many modes of identity
performance.

Transnationalism Reinvigorated

With respect to the aforementioned definitions and applications of the terms
“transnationalism” and “transnationality,” Amanda Souza is arguably a transnational
second generation Brazilian-American. She participates in social activities that transcend
national boundaries and contributes to the cohesion and collective identity of a
transnational community. Indeed, she is not a passive member but an active agent
within a “transnational village” and asserts herself as young leader through her work with Youth
Ministry of the Paroquia Santo Antonio. Moreover, her engagement with multiple online
communities of dispersed Brazilians arguably qualifies her as an emergent actor in the
Brazilian diaspora. Her commitment and active membership to cyber publics that include
Brazilian immigrants, visiting students, and work visa holders, as well as her strategic
employment of this connectivity for organizing purposes, demonstrates her role in an
abstract, Internet based diasporic community. Thus, if transnationalism signifies
particular social morphologies that persist across national boundaries, Amanda must be
recognized as a young transnational: she is at once embedded in transnational social
formations and actively shapes those formations through continued creative participation.
However, to imply that the texture of her transnational experience is therefore analogous
to that of the first generation would be to overlook several unique elements of Amanda’s second generation transnationality.

Firstly, by expanding the domain of diasporic social activity and interest into cyber space, Amanda reinterprets the terms of diasporic citizenship itself. The Internet provides the means for Amanda to imagine and articulate herself as a member of dispersed Brazilian community *beyond* the Paroquia Santo Antonio and Alston Brighton, one that includes greater diversity of Brazilians in its scope. More importantly, she voices her opinions and concerns in cyber-publics and online forums *as a second generation immigrant*, asserting the status of foreign born Brazilians as a noteworthy and unique constituency of diasporic citizens. This is not to imply that *real* places do not remain symbolically charged and linked to her diasporic experience; in fact, Amanda explicitly recognizes the power of place as *validating* her membership to a larger, more abstract Brazilian community and acknowledges the “logic of the sedentary”\(^\text{333}\) as an important influence on her Brazilian-American identity. “Nothing can stand in for *actually* going [Brazil],” she explained, “and I think it’s important to keep going, you know? It would be hard to call myself Brazilian if I never actually *went* to Brazil [laughs].” Nonetheless, cyber space can and does function as an effective middle ground, a means of negotiating the quotidian elements of transnational life and participation in an imagined diasporic community. With respect to the more localized modes of social engagement that transnationalism entails, the internet likewise provides Amanda with an alternative mode of being “here” and “there.” In this sense, she also reconfigures the terms of her transnational social field, pushing its limits beyond the material world and into a virtual one. Of course, first generation immigrants frequently use the same cyber connections to facilitate and organize their own transnational social ties; however, that second generation immigrants like Amanda may regard cyber space as a privileged medium for transnational exchange bespeaks of novel interpretations of what transnational social formations can be and who they may include. Furthermore, it is through these increasingly online and technologically enabled social spheres that Amanda actually *reclaims* and *reinvigorates* the transnational social relations of her parents. Amanda’s

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introduction of innovative uses for Skype into her own domestic life (see Chapter IV: Together Through Tech) indicates desire to maintain, if not reinforce, the social ties that keep her nuclear family linked with relatives and friends in Valadares on her own terms. Just as the cyber publics to which she subscribes playfully reframe the limits of transnational social fields, Amanda’s claiming of transnational responsibility in the domestic sphere transforms the nature of the transnational relations for which they account, submitting them to a similar reinvigoration. No longer does a telephone call alone qualify as adequate transnational exchange when entire families, dispersed across multiple continents, can sit down together to dinner and share a meal through cyberspace. Thus, if “transnationalism” is understood as a social morphology and “transnationality” therefore signifies membership to or participation in those transnational social formations, Amanda’s transnationality is distinctive. In many ways, she taps elements of her own, second generation experience – namely her familiarity with social networking and digital communications tools – in order to reenergize cross-border social connections created by the first generation. Transnationalism certainly persists in the second generation, but it is not simply replicated or reproduced: in Amanda’s case, it is reinvigorated insofar this term signifies both a strengthening and a transformation of its object.

If the term “transnationalism” corresponds to a mode of cultural reproduction that blends elements of home and host cultures in everyday micro practices, the aforementioned reinvigoration becomes clearer still. Much like the young desis that Shankar studies in her ethnography Desi Land: Teen Culture, Class and Success in Silicon Valley, Amanda playfully blends discrepant cultural codes in a mode that is uniquely her own, claiming “ownership and belonging”334 in hybrid cultural spaces that she engenders. They are both transnational and produced by a distinct second generation experience. Indeed, recalling her characterization of “Porglish” – the dynamic and oftentimes subversive mixing of English and Portuguese dialects that Amanda and her friends employ in daily conversation – as a performance that “makes [them] feel independent and cool” and a cultural practice that is “really [theirs],”335 helps to

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emphasize the unique qualities of these transnational cultural productions that are no longer representative of, in Shankar’s terms, “immigrants longing to return to a homeland” but rather indicative of second generation immigrants as “producers of distinctive, widely circulating cultural and linguistic forms.”

The crux of the matter is precisely the particular experiences, insights and desires that second generation immigrants cobble together in their cultural productions. Terms like “bizado” are used deliberately in Amanda’s hybrid vernacular and invoke a particular brand of hybridity that acknowledges birth and upbringing in the United States. Porglish, in other words, is a cultural production of the second generation and thus gives a clue as to what differentiates this experience from the narrative of the first. Moreover, the hybrid dialect subverts traditional notions of “authenticity” which might demand, as Amanda suggests, linguistic purity as a means of maintaining strong social ties to Brazil. In fact, subversion of this nature is, Amanda argues, “the point of Porglish.” “None of our American friends can even come close to understanding us when we talk Porglish,” she explained, “and sometimes our parents can keep up, but not usually.” That the “us” in this sentence refers only to second generation Brazilian immigrants represents, perhaps, a definitive generational shift in transnationalism as a cultural production.

If cyber publics and online interest groups can also be read as cultural productions, then Amanda certainly qualifies as “transnational,” insofar as an individual or community’s role in the creation and proliferation of such productions is a crucial index of transnationalism and transnationality. Indeed, her contribution to these sites demonstrates a desire to represent herself as member of a larger diasporic Brazilian community and to voice her opinions as an agent who is “here” and “there.” Yet, once again, the being “here and there” of transnationality is inflected by her experience as a second generation immigrant, for she does not, as I have done, conceal her status as “American-born” from her online cohort, but rather uses this designation as a platform for demonstrating her potential as a contributor. Once Amanda and I had become more familiar, I felt more comfortable divulging what I considered embarrassing personal information, namely my instant messenger moniker Brazillia723 and its function as a liberating alter ego. Upon hearing my confession, and perhaps also a hint of retroactive

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336 Ibid., p. 4.
distress in my voice, she seemed at once amused and confused. “Why do you want to hide the fact that you were born here?” she asked me, “You’re fighting a losing battle. Believe me, I know.” Arguably, Amanda recognizes my anxieties, for she too has experienced the uncomfortable cultural, social, and subjective disjunctures created by the hyphen in our names; hyphens that whisper or announce our presence as “not quite.” Not quite “here.” Not quite “there.” Not quite the same, nor altogether different. However, Amanda navigates these ambiguities by *reclaiming* status as a cultural producer and a transnational social actor in cyber space and, more importantly, does so *on the strength of her experience as a second generation immigrant*. Amanda therefore *reinvigorates* these cultural productions with her distinct second generation insights, ideas and by articulating her unique perspective. Moreover, she does so consciously and deliberately, as means of claiming agency and authority in a community that might otherwise relegate her to the margins of participation in cultural activity.

The reflexivity of these cultural productions, which signifies a transnational perspective that is shaped by the exceptional circumstances of second generation upbringing, also calls attention to an emergent form of transnational consciousness. Amanda certainly navigates what Vertovec calls “de-centered attachments” and “multiple identifications”; however, her mode of negotiating these overlapping subjective positions must reconcile a different set of problematic social and cultural conditions: unlike her parents, she was not born in Brazil nor did she undergo the same process of acculturation to life in the United States. If consciousness reflects modes of belonging, ways of locating oneself amidst a coherence of identities, then Amanda “belongs” differently. She does not deny that her birth and upbringing in the United States are in many ways an influence on her identity – perhaps best evinced by her linguistic cultural productions – yet she asserts nonetheless that she is “Brazilian-American, in that order.” She changes the terms of diasporic belonging through her conscious affiliation and identification with the Brazilian diaspora, demanding that it include the second generation in its scope, not as passive experiencers but as *active* agents. She is a “conscious” transnational without being “transnational” in the conventional sense of the

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term. Her “two-ness,” to return to the theoretical lexicon of W.E.B. Dubois, is distinctive, which is to say, produced by a distinctive way of being “here and there.”

If transnational studies is willing to acknowledge Amanda as a young transnational, it must account for elements of foreign birth and upbringing\(^{338}\) that constitute a uniquely second generation transnational experience and perspective. I have heretofore employed the term *reinvigoration* to describe these developments, but regardless of the particular semantic categorization, a new nomenclature is arguably necessarily to provide an adequate exposition of this phenomenon. Moreover, the dual predictions of current scholarship with respect to generational transformations of transnationality – on the one hand, integration resulting in loss of transnational social engagement and identity, and on the other, the replication of transnational social form and identification – may not effectively capture Amanda’s experience. Of course, more research is necessary to better understand how such a reinvigoration occurs, changes, or solidifies over time, and whether this new mode of diasporic citizenship and transnational engagement might become further politicized as young second generation immigrants like Amanda reach voting age in both their country of residence *and* their parents’ homeland. The expectations and responsibilities of academia may also prove increasingly influential for those second generation immigrants who attend institutions of higher learning and may thus impact the *persistence* of reinvigorated transnational social engagement and cultural identification. The factors which may contribute to the further development of this alternative transnationality are myriad and can be approached from various disciplinary perspectives. Much remains uncertain, and the efficacy of conjecture is debatable. What is clear, however, is that something has occurred in the second generation. Whatever the future may hold for Amanda – however her role as an actor in transnational social space may further develop and whatever new enactments her Brazilian-American identity may entail – transnational studies will undoubtedly have to yield, at the very least, the possibility of change.

I telephoned Amanda recently, just to check in. An entire month had passed since our last conversation, – how the passage of time seems to intensify when deadlines loom – and I found myself suddenly stricken with a nagging curiosity. Her first year at

\(^{338}\) I use the term “foreign” here to mean “outside of Brazil.”
university was now reaching its climactic finale. After a final series of rights and a crescendo of effervescent festivities, dorm rooms would be dismantled and legions of parents would arrive to recover their little neophytes. This whole ordeal, I thought, would probably prove daunting for Amanda, for whom homecomings have often been fraught affairs. I recalled the uncomfortable terms of her resignation from private school, her return to Alston Brighton and her sense of isolation in her own home. Perhaps her imminent return from university would provoke similar anxieties, and she might appreciate a gesture of solidarity. A telephone call would suffice, and I fancied myself quite the knight, willing to rescue Amanda from what would surely be a calamitous conclusion to the academic year. Waiting in anticipation for her answer, I realized my own presumptuousness, and recognized the projection of my own trepidation onto her state of affairs, for soon I too would face an ominous homecoming of a different sort. She did not, however, pick up her telephone. I was forced instead to leave a poorly phrased voicemail. “This is Amanda. Leave a message.” I await her reply. I am intrigued to know whether she is still being Brazilian-American, in that order.

Transnationalism Towards Cosmopolitanism

The task of locating a young man like Tiabe within the phenomenological domain of “transnationalism” is perhaps more difficult even that locating Tiabe on a map. He often outlined his plans to travel after university, to get “off the grid,”339 plotting the coordinates of an imagined expedition in his mind, like a mariner preparing to set sail. With respect to the theoretical purview of transnational studies, Tiabe may be likewise “off the grid.” As he prepares to hop-skip his way across the globe, the discipline must prepare to follow him, perhaps past familiar boundaries. He considers himself not so much a citizen of two nations or the product of two cultures, but rather a citizen of the world. A second generation immigrant. A first generation cosmopolite.

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If indeed Tiabe’s mode of multi-local identification falls outside the semantic province of the term “transnationalism” and is more akin to “cosmopolitanism,” effectively distinguishing between these phenomena proves essential, for they bear much in common despite their signifying different dispositions towards multi-locality. Indeed, the overlap between the two is significant. As Ulrich Beck argues in his short essay *Sociology in the Second Age of Modernity*, cosmopolitanism emerges “as more processes”\(^\text{340}\) show less regard of state boundaries…[as]people shop internationally, work internationally, love internationally, marry internationally, grow up and are educated internationally, live and think transnationally, that is combine multiple loyalties and identities in their lives.”\(^\text{341}\) Here, Beck demonstrates the comingling of the two concepts, emphasizing the importance of a transnational social, economic and political space, but one in which “the inhabitants of a second, post-national modernity…are constantly reformulating and abandoning new categorizations.”\(^\text{342}\) However, though they straddle multiple territories and penetrate the boundaries of several nation states, transnational lives still maintain a degree of coherence and continuity. Amanda, for example, may articulate multiple national solidarities, but her sense of belonging is very much *emplaced*, connected to Alston Brighton and Governador Valadares. Although she is increasingly interested in matters concerning the Brazilian diaspora, her commitment to immediate family and her local Brazilian community calls attention to the enduring importance of the local, the “logic of the sedentary,”\(^\text{343}\) in transnational lifestyle and culture. In striking contrast, the image that Beck offers of these “post-national moderns,” with their provisional solidarities, invokes a notion of world citizenship that transnationalism does not. Certainly Beck’s assertion that the cosmopolitan “both entails the national project and extends its”\(^\text{344}\) might also be true of transnational social fields; however, the crux of the matter – that is, the crucial difference between transnationalism

\(^{340}\) Here Beck seems to having in mind a wide range of “processes” that may be economic, social, cultural or political in scope. However, for the purposes of this ethnography, I focus on the cultural and social “processes” that Beck describes as transformations in multi-local/multi-cultural identity and identification.


\(^{342}\) Ibid., p. 92.


\(^{344}\) Ibid.
and cosmopolitanism – seems to be the nature of “the resulting mixture” of solidarities which, in the case of the latter, is “specific individuality determining identity and integration in this global society.” Indeed, transnationalism seems to be a necessary prerequisite for such cosmopolitan engagement and diasporas can also, as Beck asserts, be thought of as communities that may foster this sort of cultural, linguistic and national polyvalence. However, that diasporas are often exclusive with regards to membership, poses a distinct problem for the aforementioned brand of cosmopolitanism. Likewise, though transnational social fields, as Levitt and Glick Schiller assert, interrogate neat divisions of connection into local, national, transnational and global, localized loyalties… promoted by homeland government agencies, they still serve to facilitate social cohesion and economic exchange within transnational communities.

Transnational social, economic, and cultural space, imagined as a social field, is neither altogether “unbound” nor “post-national,” for the role of nation-states is by no means made obsolete but rather takes on novel forms in response to transnational migration. The boundaries of citizenship are indeed pushed, but are nevertheless linked to nations. Alternatively, Beck asks whether “cosmopolitanism cancels national identity” and whether there might be an emergent “cosmopolitan nation.” Whatever the case may be, Beck’s “second age of modernity” further explores the limits and, perhaps, the efficacy of citizenships and national identities beyond transnationalism and transnationality.

Thus, the expanded notion of agency and identity that Beck praises must then be thought of in slightly different terms from transnationalism, perhaps in terms of the potential for global citizenship. Cosmopolitan identity thus conceived proves to be a more apt description of Tiabe’s orientation towards his own national solidarities and his attitude towards cultural identity. It is important to note that these two categories are in many ways ideologically entangled. As Bhabha aptly observes, “nation-people” - a term which might also describe transnationals insofar the are people of two nations - are always and problematically objects of a nationalist pedagogy that represents to them as culturally “authentic” some set of “pre-given cultural traits reified by history and

345 Ibid.
tradition.” Even in the context of transnationalism, “pedagogical representations,” though less unified, still attempt to manage “nation-people” regardless of whether those people might belong to another nation simultaneously. Cultural authenticity and the nation are in this way intertwined. Cosmopolitanism may therefore signify a simultaneous departure from the concept of the cultural “authenticity,” as it precipitates from different institutions and discourses, and of fixed national solidarity. Tiabe, whose concern for such distinctions is only slight, is perhaps prepared to make such a departure.

He does not feel that his national solidarity need be limited to his country of residence and his ancestral homeland, nor does he find himself, as seems to be the case for Amanda, preoccupied with “preserving” his ties to a Brazilian heritage or transnational Brazilian community. The term “solidarity” itself seems to take on, for Tiabe, another set of meanings outside of what Bhabha calls the “nation-space.”

Of course, this is not to imply that Tiabe has foresworn his identity as a young Brazilian-American; however, this self-identification does not become for Tiabe either prescriptive or limiting. Though he may maintain his transnational social connections to family and friends in Rio, his appetite for foreign languages and his desire to “learn how to belong in other places” takes precedence over the continuity of his transnational exchange and relations with Brazil. Whereas Amanda and Beatrice both express a desire to return to Brazil later in life, Tiabe does not share these aspirations, nor does he consider the United States to be the alternative option. Tiabe is allergic, it would seem, to the notion of particular national solidarity and cultural affinity at the expense of a potential global citizenship. As Beck asserts, for the cosmopolitan “it is no longer a matter of solidarity or obligation but of a conflict-laden coexistence side by side in a transnationally neutralized space,” and it is with such neutrality that Tiabe approaches his relationship to Brazil and to the United States, his country of residence and his ancestral homeland.

That transnational social space (i.e. the transnational social field) is in many ways not neutralized – often demanding of individual transnational agents complex obligations

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348 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. pg. 2.
349 Ibid.
350 Personal Communication
351 Ibid.
– perhaps demonstrates the definite departure – both theoretical and practical - of cosmopolitan experience from transnational experience. Just as Beck describes this transnationally neutralized social realm as one of “solidarity with strangers,” 352 Tiabe is eager for just that: to explore a sort of global citizenship. In stark contrast to other second generation Brazilians who seem, at times, overwhelmed with negotiating solidarity with two nations and manifold representations of “authentic” national culture, Tiabe feels limited by the obligations and affiliations often associated with transnational social fields, though this term (transnational social field) is relatively unfamiliar to him. That he must visit, that he has to maintain communication with family abroad, that he should, eventually, send money and goods to kin in Brazil, and that he ought to remain relatively aware of homeland politics and current events are all responsibilities by which Tiabe feels constrained:

My mom talks to me about that kind of stuff sometimes. Not much, and more now that I’m older. She talks about how it will be important that I visit home and send money back. That sort of thing. But I just can’t bring myself to care that much. [Laughs] It strikes me as so limiting. And so time-consuming. I feel like I have other things to do. Important things too! Not just like, boring stuff. I really feel like I need to travel. Like, I need that experience. Can you imagine going through life only knowing about this tiny little piece of the world? That’s actually kind of messed up, if you think about it. That’s why I think its so important. It’s more important to me than being super Brazilian. 353

To clarify, I asked Tiabe what exactly to him seemed “important,” to which he responded:

Like, having other cultural experiences. Like, actually caring about other people who aren’t the same as you. Also, learning other languages. Can you believe some people are just happy knowing English and that’s it!

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352 Ibid., p. 94.
353 Personal Communication
Interestingly, many of the responsibilities and activities that Tiabe here laments are contingent upon his continued fluency in Portuguese and thus his departure from transnationality and his gravitation towards a cosmopolitan identity might be better conceptualized by investigating his articulated desire to explore other languages. That such an exploration, perhaps at the expense of his fluency in Portuguese, is “more important than being super Brazilian” demonstrates his privileging of what Beck describes as the “[choosing] and [weighing of] different overlapping identities and lives on the strength of combination.” Rather than hybridity, a term whose etymology invokes the mixing of two elements, Tiabe opts for cultural polyvalence, a polymorphous approach to identity and citizenship that mirrors his hunger for a multiplicity of foreign language experiences. He employs language as medium for the supplementation rather than the reification of cultural identity, as well as a subversive technique for contesting the limits of national solidarity and citizenship. Thus, as both a social actor and a cultural producer and consumer, Tiabe appears far more compelled to diversify his engagement with alternative social networks and participate in alternative cultural practices and phenomena. Though his social and cultural activity is currently localized to the transnational social field within which his family is embedded, he anticipates further exploration of national solidarities and cultural identifications that cannot be easily defined as “transnational.” When asked if he considers himself a “citizen of the world” or a “global citizen,” Tiabe’s reply was quite confident: “No. Not now. But I hope to be.” For the time being, transnational studies can afford, perhaps, to categorize Tiabe as a young transnational Brazilian-American, though he may soon take a leap towards cosmopolitan identity, for he is already conscious of this possibility.

As I have suggested elsewhere (see Ch. III Fun With Words) Tiabe’s cosmopolitanism also has profound ethical implications. His interest in global citizenship and cultural sharing also constitutes an ethical commitment; yet, the liberating elements of cosmopolitan identity are difficult to effectively translate into a coherent set of moral principles. Even Beck finds such ethical terrain difficult to negotiate, and his

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354 Personal Communication
355 Ibid., p. 92.
interrogations of nationalism and deterministic ideologies of cultural identity are always framed in the form of questions. Likewise, his “post national moderns” represent the ideal cosmopolitans, not necessarily an existing constituency, but rather a community of latent global citizens dispersed throughout the social forms and modes of exchange that have begun to challenge the supremacy of national boundaries as determinants of allegiance and identity. So too is the “cosmopolitan project” that Beck describes somewhat nebulous as an ethical enterprise, and even Tiabe, for whom the theoretical foundations and ethical imperative of such a project “just make sense,” struggles to articulate what exactly the moral commitment of global citizenship entails. Such a perspective necessitates a difficult conceptual departure from the notion of “world society as a patchwork quilt of nation-states (that is, the sum of sovereign nation-states)” and an equally complex recalibration of criteria that determine the value of others based on social and cultural proximity. “If I am only bound to those who are close to me, already familiar,” Judith Butler aptly observes in a lecture given at the Nobel Museum in Stockholm, “then my ethics are invariably parochial, communitarian, and exclusionary.” That is to say, reconciling obligations to the familiar and the foreign is a slippery undertaking.

The aporia that theorizing cosmopolitan ethics provoke is indeed tough to surmount, and I find it helpful to consult the work of Jacques Derrida as a means of understanding why theories of global citizenship and universal ethics of solidarity are often untenable. His series of compiled lectures entitled Of Hospitality approaches the dilemma of ethics based on unconditional “hospitality” by intensely exploring the seemingly irreconcilable tensions within the term itself, and interrogating the subtle presuppositions with respect to subjectivity that such a term entails. Derrida calls attention to the impossibility of an ethics of hospitality without immanent inequality,

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358 This lecture articulates and elaborates on Butler’s more recent work, namely her book of short essays entitled “Precarious Life.”
360 It is worth noting the multiple definitions of the French hospitalité which may mean (a) the action of freely and graciously hosting and housing another in one’s own home, (b) generosity, kindness, cordiality or sympathy, and (c) asylum, refuge or sanctuary.
without “predominance in the structure of right to hospitality and of the relationship with the foreigner.”

Hospitality, Derrida asserts, requires always an element of mastery, provided that a host or hostess must have authority over the house, country, or nation s/he offers as shelter or refuge for the sojourner. It is the “master of the house,” he argues, “that lays down the laws of hospitality.” Reciprocally, the sojourner is always inevitably a guest, at the will of his her host as “master” of the asylum. Already, the distinction of between Self and Other is askew, privileging the host or hostess and blasting apart the intention of an ethics of hospitality – of solidarity with strangers – upon whose shoulders the notion of cosmopolitanism seems to stand. A “pure” or perhaps “universal” hospitality bears little resemblance to the form of hospitality practiced my human agents, which necessarily and often violently perpetuates systems of inequality that distinguish Self from Other. Moreover, that such distinctions, the grounds for discerning the familiar from the foreign, are codified - what Derrida calls the “laws of hospitality” – explicitly opposes a universal law – “The law” – of unconditional hospitality that might make a cosmopolitan ethics possible. This argument Derrida frames cogently in second lecture in Of Hospitality entitled Step of hospitality/ No hospitality:

The antinomy of hospitality irreconcilably opposes The law, in its universal singularity, to a plurality that is not only a dispersal (laws in the plural), but a structured multiplicity, determined by a process of division and differentiation: by a number of laws that distribute their history and their anthropological geography differently.

For Derrida, the only possible conception of hospitality already presumes a “predominance,” the host “answering for a dwelling place, for one’s identity, one’s space.” This hospitality presupposes criteria of judgment and convention that are, to reiterate Butler’s observation, “invariably parochial, communitarian, and exclusionary.” The host or hostess’ authority over a bounded edifice, be it a household, city or nation

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362 Ibid.
363 Ibid., pg. 79.
364 Ibid., pg. 149.
simultaneously estranges as it welcomes. Alternatively, the impossible hospitality, the unconditional welcoming of strangers, surmounts and destroys all laws and duties of hospitality. That the former inevitably “corrupts” the latter is, according to Derrida, “irreducible.” Thus, Derrida leaves his readers, perhaps as a matter of course, to wrestle with the impossibility of an ethical project that transcends this logic of mastery and control. However, what for Derrida seems utopian and logically flawed, is, for Tiabe, within reach. The work of Paul Gilroy, I assert, offers the platform for a theoretical leap out of such aporia that perhaps Tiabe has already made. In his book entitled *Post-Colonial Melancholia*, in a section called *The Planet*, Gilroy articulates what he believes are the proper conditions for cosmopolitanism, asserting that “methodological cultivation from a degree of estrangement from one’s own culture and history might qualify as essential to a cosmopolitan commitment.” Thus, in contrast to a logic of familiarity, a criterion for valuing others which privileges cultural and national proximity and devalues distance and difference, the cosmopolitan perspective that Gilroy promotes requires a “process of exposure to otherness” and a recognition of “the irreducible value of diversity within sameness.” Provided that such a degree of self estrangement, of marginality within familiarity, provides the fertile conditions for developing cosmopolitanism – both as a political and ethical project as well as an identity – I would add Tiabe to Gilroy’s list of paradigmatic cosmopolitans. An afternoon spent chatting with Tiabe over Skype seems to have perfectly captured his acute awareness of the “value of diversity within sameness,” as both an empowering personal philosophy and as emergent ethical stance. Tiabe explained that “[he doesn’t] feel so at home in the United States or in Brazil that it makes [him] want to give everything else up” and later acknowledged this estrangement as both volitional and circumstantial. Here, he draws a connection from the his transnational birth and upbringing “in between” languages, cultural values, and nations, to a degree of subjective distance from what might be

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367 *Ibid*.
368 In the section of *Postcolonial Melancholia* entitled *The Planet*, Gilroy offers his readers several examples of exemplary cosmopolitans, naming Tom Hurndall and Rachel Corrie, as individuals who assumed the ethical and cultural enterprise of “self-estrangement” necessary for real cosmopolitan commitment.
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considered his “culture and history,” his perpetual and partially self imposed status as an outsider or a guest.

Growing up between Brazil and the United States I think I kind of have a thing for other cultures. Having spent so much time going between Rio and Danbury, I guess I needed to learn to communicate with so many different people. And it was really confusing for a really long time. But eventually I got used to it. [You got used to what?] To being, like, moving around a lot. And also not really knowing what my real home was. [So, what is your real home?] Well, I guess I’m still not sure. [Laughs] But that’s whatever.

A moment later, Tiabe further described his happiness-in-homelessness:

I feel a little bit different in both places. Like, I’m not really at home. When I’m here, people can tell that I’m not, like, from here, and when I’m there I don’t really fit in either. I kind of stand out in both places, you know? But it doesn’t bother me. I feel more relaxed.... I think that’s why I want to travel so much, I’m comfortable being different... it’s really all I know.

What might be characterized as a distinct second generation experience, inheriting a practice of “going between” two culturally divergent locales, appears related to Tiabe’s sense of security at the periphery of each. He refers to himself confidently as “not really at home” and as “standing out” in both places, Brazil and the United States, as though he were unfazed by his position as a marginal member of multiple cultural communities. I pushed Tiabe further, however, asking how this attitude influences his aspirations to work at the United Nations, to which he responded:

I feel like there aren’t enough people in the world who really appreciate...that’s probably not the right word...who really care about people who are different from

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370 Bracketed phrases here represent my responses to my informant’s commentary.
371 Personal Communication
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them. Like, people *put up* with different people, but that’s always forced. Like, the whole thing with gay marriage. I feel like people are looking for a way to make it, like, *bearable*. But that’s totally backwards I think. What was your question again…right, *Why do I want to work for the United Nations?* Well I guess it’s because I feel like I have this opportunity to connect with a lot more people than most people do. I feel responsible for that. [“For what exactly?] For helping people communicate better and getting people to understand differences better I guess. So that people don’t just *put up* with different people.373

Here, Tiabe expresses the ethical implications of his cosmopolitan identity as a responsibility to facilitate communication and an obligation to encourage “understanding” of differences. Moreover, Tiabe arguably imagines the “opportunity” to provide such a service as having been *bequeathed* to him by the circumstances of his own upbringing. An intriguing link between Tiabe’s emergent cosmopolitan identity *as an ethical commitment* and his cultural experience as a second generation immigrant – a distinct “process of exposure to otherness” – thus comes into sharper focus. As he articulates his desire not simply to *see* the world but to communicate effectively with its other inhabitants, he also acknowledges his own sense of felicitous estrangement, the satisfaction of “[standing] out in both places,” as an empowering perspective. To claim that the circumstances of second generation immigrant upbringing *determine* this sort of commitment to cosmopolitan ethical principles would be overzealous; yet, there is certainly a discernable correlation between Tiabe’s inherited participation in multiple national and cultural experiences and what Beck terms “solidarity with strangers.”

Provided that the transnational circumstances of Tiabe's upbringing are at least partially responsible for the development of his cosmopolitan identity and his commitment to moral principles that interrogate the borders of nations *as moral as well as geographic boundaries*, transnational studies may be in the position to push its scholarship further into the ethical domain. Transnationality *as a platform for cosmopolitan commitment* may be readily observable in the immigrant second generation. If the cultural experiences of second generation immigrants like Tiabe may entail a

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“degree of estrangement from [their] own culture and history,” perhaps the ethnographic study of their unfolding lives may provide a more concrete, less utopian, understanding of cosmopolitism as an emergent mode of both cultural and national identification and an ethical project. The interstitial perspective of youth born in between languages, systems of cultural values, and national solitaries – of perpetual estrangement – might in fact furnish transnational studies with the tools to solve ethical dilemmas in the era of globalization. One could certainly argue, however, that such cosmopolitanism is simply an individual anomaly rather than a product of a specifically second generation experience. Moreover, Tiabe’s age may prompt skepticism as to the possible endurance of cosmopolitan identity past young adulthood, as new legal and perhaps domestic responsibilities may impede his ability to “constantly [reformulate] and [abandon] new categorizations.” Nevertheless, if second generation immigrants like Tiabe are given the opportunity articulate their experience of “difference within sameness” as the foundation of moral principles and decisions, perhaps an ethical voice might emerge through which something like Derrida’s ethics of hospitality could be realized on a cosmopolitan scale. Certain second generation immigrant perspectives can be understood, in other words, as welcoming difference without asserting cultural mastery, as a hospitality that does not “other others” but rather receives the “sojourner” as a friend-in-estrangement from complete authority in a national or a cultural “home.” To be always a cultural guest, as Tiabe describes himself, creates the possibility of self-identity that does not posit its own authority over a cultural locus and therefore of hospitality unencumbered by the inequality of traditional host/guest relations. There exists a less frequently deployed tertiary definition of the noun host that may prove helpful for conceiving of this alternative hospitality:

3 (also host computer) a computer that mediates multiple access to databases mounted on it or provides other services to a computer network.

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The verb to host, derived from the noun’s marginalized meaning, signifies the act of facilitating dialogue between networks, or between people of difference without ownership. A host understood as a node or a point of convergence, and thus the act of hosting understood as an act of networking, might constitute the basis of a profound ethical gesture of hospitality. I imagine Tiabe at the periphery of the Dia da Independencia festival: willing to concede his own estrangement, his peripheral status amongst kin, in order to host many other cultural dialogues.

Transnationalism Lost in Translation

Anselmo is often lost for words. He struggles to articulate where precisely he stands with respect to a history and a culture that resist translation. His genealogy presents itself as cryptic, and though it captures his imagination, it simultaneously eludes his grasp. Likewise, I find myself unable to reconcile Anselmo’s account of himself with current transnational scholarship. Whether transnationalism represents a social morphology, a mode of cultural production, a frame of consciousness or a performance of identity, Anselmo cannot be said to partake in such a phenomenon. He is not fully engaged in or engaged by the transnational social field in which his parents are embedded, and, as a result, has little if any transnational social responsibilities and obligations. Indeed, the concept of social “embeddedness” proves useful for understanding why Anselmo is, arguably, excluded from participation in his parents’ transnational social field and thus not transnational. Though the term “embeddedness” has its origins in the economic thought of Karl Polayni and is often used by Mark Granovetter to call attention to the “fact that economic action and outcomes are affected actor’s dyadic relations,”377 Alejandro Portes offers an alternative application of this concept that functions outside the context of economic transactions. For the purposes of this ethnography, which does not critically explore transnational exchange of capital – namely because none of my informants is yet financially autonomous – this second, expanded definition of the term “embeddedness” proves useful. Portes describes two

kinds of embeddedness: relational, involving social actors relations to one another, and structural, referring to the modes of social reciprocity in which actors beyond any single exchange may be involved. According to Stephen Vertovec, for fully appreciating the power and cohesion of both social-networks and social capital in any case-study of transnationalism. Indeed, it is only social actors embedded in transnational social networks – those for whom social action is constantly in relation with “ongoing networks of social relationships” – who may deploy or accumulate social capital which may “provide privileged access to resources or restrict individual freedoms by controlling behavior.” As Anselmo observes, “[his] family in Brazil doesn’t really ask for anything from [him],” nor does Anselmo feel capable of asking for anything in return. He falls, therefore, outside the boundaries of normative reciprocity, enforceable trust and, arguably, shared values. In fact, Anselmo not only describes his lack of social capital within the transnational social network of Brazilians in which his family is embedded, but also claims to have little in common with “these people,” making explicit reference to differences in social values as a factor in his status as an “outsider.” He describes close family relatives whose sense of social obligation and personal responsibility are in many ways “diametrically opposed” to his own and attributes this disjuncture to having been “brought up here, in America, where I can’t be around them [his family in Brazil] so easily.” If, as Vertovec suggests, social capital is maintained “by visits, communication by post or telephone, marriage, and,” most importantly for the purposes of my work, with “participation in events and membership in associations,” then Anselmo has only a peripheral role in his parents’ social field. Indeed, his contributions to and resources derived from this trans-border social formation are virtually nonexistent. Of course, one cannot ignore Anselmo’s youth which might absolve him of certain obligations or responsibilities, particularly economic

379 Vertovec. *Transnationalism.* pg. 36.
380 Ibid.
381 Personal Communication
382 Personal Communication
383 Anselmo asked, for personal reasons, that I omit any further information on this subject.
384 Personal Communication
385 Personal Communication
386 Vertovec. *Transnationalism*, pg. 36.
ones, within this transnational social field. That Anselmo is not yet financially autonomous means, perhaps, that he is not yet in a position to contribute independently to the economic exchanges of actors “embedded” in social fields. Yet, to the extent that “exchanges” may also be social and cultural – pertaining not to economic capital but to social and cultural capital in the sense that Bourdieu uses these terms – Anselmo is only a marginal actor. Thus, if transnationalism is understood as a social form or structure (however fluid it may be) and thus suggests that the aforementioned exchanges occur across borders, Anselmo is not “transnational” nor partakes in social practices that fall within the category of “transnationalism.”

When the term “transnationalism” is used to denote a mode of cultural production, Anselmo’s participation in such a phenomenon seems even less substantial. Unlike Amanda, he is not engaged in any online cyber communities that organize around shared cultural history nor does he often engage in what might be considered “transnational” cultural reproductions that blend elements of his multi-cultural experience. At the liberal arts university which he attends, Anselmo rarely, if ever, brings his Brazilian heritage to bear on his studies or extra-curricular activates, and insofar as academia serves as an important zone of cultural reproduction, he does not use the academic environment as means of (re)producing “transnational” cultural practices. Indeed, Anselmo describes his scholarly pursuits and recreational activities as, for the most part, divorced from his multi-cultural and multi-national background:

When I’m here, no one knows I’m Brazilian, and I kind of just disappear. I’m totally anonymous. And I think, because I’m a science major, I don’t have to really worry about being Brazilian as much though, you know? Because…who cares? But for you guys, in the Humanities and the Social Sciences…well it’s different, right? I mean if I was a sociology major, or like an anthropology major, my identity would matter more in my work.  

\[\text{387 Personal Communication}\]
As a cultural “producer,” Anselmo cannot be said to effectively engage in any sort of active hybrid creativity. So too does the application of term “transnationality” as a type of consciousness and as a hybrid form of national and cultural identity, serve to further exclude Anselmo from more abstract personal experiences associated with transnationalism. As I have suggested, the subjective elements of transnationalism, which are markedly absent in the case of Anselmo, are perhaps best approached through language, particularly the symbolic implications of linguistic deficiency for the performative expression of transnational identity. Indeed, considering Bhabha’s assertion that the “transnational dimension of cultural transformation… makes the process of cultural translation a complex form a signification,” Anselmo’s particular social, cultural and subjective aporia might be better understood by focusing on the circumstances of his exclusion from or lack of access to such a “form of signification,” that is, the bi-lingual fluency that enacts this “cultural translation.” Language or languages, in other words, promote by their intersection and coalescence the performance of transnational identity, of being “here” and, more importantly for second generation immigrants like Anselmo, being “there” despite the circumstances of their birth. Simply put, the tools of the complex, inventive, and constructive signification of which Bhabha speaks, when considered at the level of the individual, are to some degree linguistic.

Indeed, the hybridity that Amanda not only experiences but actively performs finds its most distinct and perhaps its most powerful expression in language, in a dialect that requires for its efficacy fluency in both English and Portuguese. Furthermore, if language is indeed vital for the making of a transnational subject and, perhaps, a subject who therefore feels obligated or, at the very least, able to reproduce, strengthen or even create new trans-border social ties and cultural productions, the absence of language can also be, as seems to be the case for Anselmo, an un-making. Thus, Anselmo worries that he is not – and never will be – “authentically” Brazilian, or rather, that he is not and never will be authentic enough, granted that many of the normative scripts that demand “authentic” performances of cultural identity employ linguistic fluency as a criterion of judgment. As a result, Anselmo frequently finds himself alienated from his kin in Brazil, and attributes this alienation, in part, to his struggle to speak fluent Portuguese. Neither

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388 Bhabha. The Location of Culture. pg. 173.
within locale nodes in a transnational network nor in the context of a larger diaspora does Anselmo “feel qualified”\textsuperscript{389} – a phrase he uses frequently – to assert membership to cultural community of dispersed Brazilians. In the context of his academic or professional life, he likewise feels “unqualified” to call attention to his hyphenated identity. He is the only of my informants to omit his Brazilian heritage from his college essay and has similarly effaced references to his cultural identity entirely form his applications to graduate school. This logic of cultural concealment is likewise organized, at least partially, by his trepidation concerning language, as Anselmo asked me, with strange foreboding, “What if they asked me to speak Portuguese? That would be embarrassing.”

Of course, generational changes in linguistic fluency have, for the most part, been accounted for by social scientists such as Rubén Rumbaut\textsuperscript{390} and Mary C. Waters\textsuperscript{391} whose research associates high levels of language assimilation, and thus a preference for English over mother tongue, with the degradation, albeit gradual, of trans-border connections amongst second generation immigrants. Nevertheless, these studies overlook the implications of such linguistic difficulties for some second generation immigrants like Anselmo, for whom the aforementioned “assimilation” is not as felicitous as these studies make it out to seem. Indeed, the absence of transnational engagement in the second generation, insofar as it can be understood through a close investigation of language, does not necessarily signify \textit{indifference} to transnational engagement and thus does not deserve exclusion from the focus of transnational studies. In other words, what seems to have been construed in social science research as apathetic withdrawal from the field of active transnational social relations on behalf of second generation immigrants, partially as a result of linguistic acculturation, may conceal a much more tumultuous experience of desire: a longing for an elusive cultural identity and authenticity as well as social agency. As Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut aptly observe in their study of second generation youth entitled \textit{Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation}, “in

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the process of translating themselves, some [second generations immigrants] gain in translation,” which seems to be the case for Amanda, “while others are lost in it,”\(^{392}\) as is the case for Anselmo. Whether Portes and Rumbaut deploy the term “translation” to draw attention to the ways that this “gain” or “loss” is expressed and therefore interpretable through language is unclear; however, I assert that language practices and aptitudes – “free play” or “bricolage” in some cases and linguistic impasses in others (see Chapter III Fun With Words) - prove to be an important index of transnationalism and transnationality in the second generation. Close linguistic analysis not only calls attention to the modes in which transnational social engagement is retained or refused, but highlights important instances of reinterpretation and the peculiar anxieties that arise from the process of linguistic self expression itself.

Nevertheless, Portes and Rumbaut’s gain/loss theory, though helpful for understanding the critical role of language in the second generation immigrant transnationality, overlooks a crucial interstice found between these two polarities that seems to best describe Anselmo’s experience. On the one hand, they associate “gain” with a claiming of agency that invokes the “[straddling] of two cultures”\(^{393}\) and on the other hand attribute “loss” to a failure amongst second generation immigrants to identify with their ancestral homeland, despite their parents’ best attempts at inculcating them with their cultural values and practices. Though the former scenario more or less anticipates the cultural hybridity demonstrated by Amanda (though it may not notice the unique texture of this hybridity), the latter does not capture the nature of Anselmo’s estrangement, for he is not, as Portes and Rumbaut suggest, “American through and through.”\(^{394}\) Though Anselmo seems to superficially embody the theoretical social trajectories of second generation immigrants articulated by Rumbaut and Waters, who argue that the American born sons and daughters of first generation immigrants are, for the most part, integrated into American social and economic life and therefore disconnected from their ancestral homes, further ethnographic investigation reveals a more complicated situation. Having been raised in an immigrant household opposed to


\(^{393}\) Ibid., pg. 190.

\(^{394}\) Ibid., pg. 191.
the ideology of assimilation, Anselmo perceives himself to be “not really American,” giving rise to a hopeless tension. He explained this antimony to me in a melancholic tone:

Having friends and stuff in high school, you hear them talk, and you interact with them in a certain way, you know? And you kind of watch how other people interact with each other and see how people act, and I think, for some reason, because I come from this weird heritage…I feel like I interact with people differently here. I feel like I’m not as in touch with this American…red, white and blue…thing.  

Thus, unique incongruities are created by Anselmo’s childhood and adolescence, the tension between being distinctly not American – a fact made explicit by his parents’ insistence that “we aren’t from here” but nevertheless not Brazilian insofar as Anselmo cannot, without deep self-doubt, claim to be “authentically” Brazilian or, alternatively, authentically perform a kind of Brazilian identity. Moreover, he attributes this sort of aporia to “having grown up here [in the United States] with two parents who are first generation [immigrants],” to being neither “here” nor “there.” “I’m really not in touch with that American ethos,” he continues, “and it makes me feel like I’m different.” That second generation immigrants may not identify completely with either their country of residence or their parents’ homeland is not by any means inconceivable; yet, the possibility that they might identify with neither, at least not sufficiently to feel any sort of national solidarity or membership, demonstrates a much more complex predicament than Rumbaut and Portes acknowledge. Anselmo has neither “assimilated,” nor does he feel capable of claiming a Brazilian identity that he feels is necessary for inclusion in either a transnational Brazilian community or what one might call the Brazilian diaspora.

Transnational studies must therefore come to terms not only with the possibility of transnationalism lost in generational translation, but also, and perhaps more
importantly, with the unique social disjunctures and subjective anxieties this absence might create. Moreover, Anselmo’s commentary bespeaks of a greater dilemma of cultural identification amongst second generation immigrants that all my informants seem to encounter in some form. Their accounts of cultural identity as a performative enterprise seem always askew, focusing almost entirely on one component of their hyphenated identity and neglecting the cultural presence of the other. Brazilian-American. They announce the first term, often with passion, but disregard the symbolic potential of the latter term, as though it were devoid of meaning. The former is over-determined, saturated with cultural significations, while the latter is silent. Even for Anselmo, who finds the Brazilian component of his hyphenated identity difficult to apprehend, the American component has little, if any, valence. As together my informants and I broached the broad topic of “culture” – cultural practice, cultural production, cultural values – the texture and influence of American culture was strikingly absent from our conversations. The term “culture” itself provoked only associations with Brazil and not with, in Anselmo’s words, the “red white and blue thing.” American “culture” presents itself to my informants as nebulous or, perhaps, sterile.

Why some second generation immigrants perceive the United States as a cultural void and thus fail to strongly identify themselves as Americans is another question transnational studies may have to consider as the second generation becomes a more widely researched demographic. Furthermore, Anselmo’s testimony reiterates the need for rigorous scholarly attention to the absence of transnationalism and transnationality in the second generation. As Peggy Levitt observes, some scholars within the discipline of transnational studies assert that the second generation will sustain minimal contact with their ancestral homeland and are likely to be “ethnic” but not necessarily transnational. Anselmo demonstrates another, perhaps more unsettling trajectory: he neither sustains significant contact with his ancestral homeland nor does he actively identify as ethnic. The absence of transnationalism may thus constitute a cultural erasure that is deserving of deeper critical research. Levitt emphasizes that it may be “too early to sound the death knell” for transnationality in the second generation; however, if such a concession is

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made, if, in other words, transnational studies eulogizes the transnationality of even some second generation immigrants, the cultural aporia that may arise in its place must not be ignored.

Anselmo was accepted to a graduate education program at Stanford University just few days after our final “interview.” He was enormously elated, no doubt, and wasted little time announcing his success to friends and family. Before the day’s end, I had heard from many sources, some close friends and other distant acquaintances, of Anselmo’s victory. However, he made a point of informing me personally of his success, pulling me aside at a party which we happened to both attend that same night. He explained that he felt, for the first time, something like pride in his own accomplishments and rejoiced that finally, after many years of feeling “not quite” valued by his parents and sensing a certain distance between them, he had something to “bring home.” Placing a hand on my shoulder, he said, softly, “I think I kind of feel proud of myself. Maybe even as a Brazilian.”

**Transnational Ambivalence**

Beatrice enjoys walking. From the morning of our first encounter to our final conversations, we were perpetually nomadic, she and I, roaming across the cityscape, hopping subway cars and bouncing from café to café. At all times she maintained a brisk pace, and I somehow always struggled to keep up, fumbling my notebook clumsily as the pages flapped about in the wind. Yet, now that my notebook sits tranquilly on my desk and I before it, finally stationary, I find myself still floundering, still struggling to apprehend a moving target. As I endeavor to better understand where Beatrice stands with respect to the multi-faceted phenomenon called “transnationalism,” I must concede both the provisional nature of this ethnography and acknowledge a certain ambiguity that transnational studies faces when confronting the second generation as an object of study. Beatrice in many ways resists categorization on all fronts. Moreover, her commentary demonstrates that the aforementioned alternative transnationalities are not coherent *typologies*. They are not mutually exclusive generational developments of
transnationalism and are therefore subject to a degree of mixing, particularly insofar as they represent *developing* rather than *developed* alternative transnational identities.

Beatrice, for example, participates in social formations that are transnational in scope and engages in social exchanges *across* borders; yet, like Tiabe, she articulates a desire to expand these cultural horizons and expresses less concern for sustaining contact with Brazil than does Amanda, though her appetite for cultural exploration does not serve as the basis for any discernible ethical stance. Still, despite the intrigue of travel, she intends to return to her ancestral homeland later in life, perhaps even romanticizing Brazil as the terminus of her life course. Such fantasy does not, however, *necessitate* a commitment to perpetually renewing transnational social ties, as Beatrice seldom worries that “[her] connection to Minas Gerais and all [her] family there will wither.”400 Her relationship to Brazil is caught between the tug of nostalgia – though never melancholia – and her desire to be unbound. As we sauntered through the network of narrow passageways that carve up Harvard Square, a hive teeming with crimson-clad students, Beatrice explained, frankly, that the “juggling act” of Brazilian-American identity – of competing national solidarities, languages and cultural commitments – is not for her “that big of a deal.”401

I’m not sure what you want me to say. Do you really *care* all that much about, like, loyalty? I never really get all too caught up in that kind of stuff. I *care* about Brazil. Totally, I do. But, like, its not everything, you know? I could be gone for like, *fifty years*, and I’m sure I would feel totally cool going back. I mean it might take some getting used to, being away for that long. But things change, you know? Its not that big of a deal.402

Even in moments when she expressed the slightest trepidation with respect to “losing touch” with her Brazilian side, these concerns were always easily assuaged, primarily by her confidence that the Internet and established online social networks provide sufficient ongoing connectivity to qualify as social and cultural commitment.

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Indeed, her online activity, insofar as it *entertains* the idea of diasporic citizenship, is similarly relaxed. This is not to suggest that these online activities are insignificant. She engages in modes of cultural production that push the boundaries of the diasporic citizenship and transnational identity, using cyberspace as a platform for reinterpreting the terms of cultural “authenticity” and articulating her Brazilian-American identity on her own terms. She shares with Amanda this interest in Internet activity *beyond* recreation and consumerism, using online communities and public forums as privileged cultural spaces. However, her participation in cyber publics does not develop any political inertia and is dedicated primarily to sustaining *loose* transnational social connections rather than forging stronger bonds of solidarity between dispersed Brazilian communities. In fact, cyberspace arguably offers Beatrice an opportunity to escape the political responsibilities life in diaspora, as she refers to Facebook and Orkut as neutral environments in which the obligation to “care about Brazilian politics”\textsuperscript{403} feels less stringent. Unlike Amanda, whose work in the Youth Ministry of the Paroquia Santo Antonio has more recently engaged with a wider range of Brazilian congregations, in Brazil and the United States, Beatrice appears less attentive to the cohesion of a larger Brazilian diaspora. She recognizes, as I have suggested (see *Chapter IV Together Through Tech*), the efficacy of the term “diaspora” for describing the condition of globally dispersed Brazilians, but does not subscribe fully to diaspora as an ideology of ethnic unity or as a political project. She certainly inserts herself into the periphery of diasporic discourse and organizations, claiming her place as a second generation immigrant in an imagined coherence of identities, but does so for exclusively personal rather than political reasons.

Beatrice is also more tolerant and less motivated by the tensions, both subjective and social, that cultural differences produce. Tiabe’s experience of cultural difference is arguably an impetus for cosmopolitan exploration while Amanda in many ways appropriates cultural differences as a means of asserting herself as an active social agent and cultural producer within a transnational social field. Alternatively, Anselmo encounters cultural differences as barriers rather than conduits for self expression, social engagement or ethical commitments. However, for Beatrice, hyphenated identity does not

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constitute such passionate and tumultuous negotiations of cultural difference. Like Amanda, she feels constrained by the demands of her parents and bemoans their insistence that she perform a cultural script organized by their nostalgia; however, failure to conform does not instigate fear of social ostracism from her transnational Brazilian community. Of course, Beatrice does not reside in what Levitt refers to as a “transnational village” and, as a result, her social and cultural obligations to her smaller, less institutionally complete community of transnational Brazilian immigrants in Watertown Massachusetts are comparatively few. Perhaps Beatrice does not therefore perceive the stakes of cultural difference and divergence to be quite as serious as they might be for Amanda. Yet, this discrepancy in the perceived “risk” associated with alternative cultural self-expression is observable elsewhere, best evinced by the differences between Amanda and Beatrice’s respective experiences applying to colleges and graduate schools.

Though both identify the process of application as troublesome, using a similar economic idiom to describe the act of “selling [oneself],” Beatrice does not mention feelings of guilt nor the sense of betrayal which, for Amanda, are so acute as to provoke shame. Rather, Beatrice speaks of the college admissions with playful cynicism, as opposed to embarrassment, and approaches her upcoming application to graduate school with a similarly light-hearted attitude:

Now I have to do it all over again. [Laughs] I gotta prove to a bunch of new people that I’m worth their time. I already know how to do it though [Laughs] I know what they want.

Giggling, she rubbed her thumb and forefingers together as though she was pinching a wad of dollar bills between them. I could not restrain my own laughter and together we cackled at our own disenchanted humor.

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I sound like such an a**hole. [Laughs] But it’s true, I guess. The CCD (Center for Career Development) said I should talk about being multi-cultural in my statements and my interviews. I’m like, pshh, I knew that.406

Of all my informants, Beatrice is perhaps the most mercurial in her commentary on Brazilian-American identity. At times she expresses great concern for cultural authenticity and laments her parents’ attempts to define its terms. Yet, at other times, as the abovementioned dialogue demonstrates, she acknowledges the artificially of such essentialism in a distinctly subversive and jocular tone. Her commitment to transnational social life seems capable of enduring drastic changes in setting, as she claims that her four year stint at university had little if any adverse effects on her sustained contacts with family abroad and her ability to visit Minas Gerais; yet, as she prepares for her graduate school education, she both concedes that “things will probably have to change” and quickly asserts that “it has to be that way.”407 There were moments in our conversation when Beatrice articulated a moving nostalgia for Brazil that I find difficult to reconcile with her otherwise avid interest in new cultural experiences that would provide, in her own words, “an opportunity to get away from all this familiar stuff.”408 Beatrice described herself in the our first interview as “flexible,” and although many first impressions are supplanted by further personal interaction – this is certainly the case with my other informants – I find myself still convinced of that flexibility, which not only makes Beatrice an intriguing character and an astonishingly honest friend, but also makes my task as an ethnographer exceedingly difficult. Can Beatrice be considered a transnational Brazilian-American? I can imagine her own response to such an inquiry would most likely reiterate a sentiment she frequently conveyed: “Does it really matter?”409 Her flexibility contains also a degree of ambivalence, and, as a result, it is difficult to answer this question without also wondering to what extent these concerns “matter.” Granted that Beatrice, as she herself suggests, is not preoccupied with matters of national solidarity, with cultural identity or with maintaining transnational social ties

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beyond those that can be renewed online, her transnationality is ambiguous, at least for the time being.

Her words compel me to consult Cervantes, to revisit that most enigmatic character, Ginés de Pasamonte, who reappears in the novel after a lengthy hiatus to articulate a similarly glib perspective as he did in his debut. The galley slave whom Don Quixote had previously liberated of his chains, now appears as Master Pedro, reincarnated as a puppeteer, and in response to the knight’s pedantic criticisms of his puppet show responds:

Don’t single out trifles, Don Quixote, and don’t expect a perfection that is impossible to find. 410

“Does it really matter?” Beatrice responds with a question that knocks me clean off my mount and likewise reminds me that I ought not go searching for impossible perfections. My work, I believe, does matter. However, I take Beatrice’s disguised advice to heart. As is the case with most ethnographic work – although some may be resistant to acknowledge the polite fiction of “completeness” – my observations here may very well be “trifles.” Of paramount importance though, is that neither Beatrice, nor Master Pedro for that matter, intends to stop the show. Beatrice kept talking, and had Don Quixote not expected such perfection himself, the puppeteer’s performance might have continued. At the risk of construing Cervantes’ intricate text as a fable, as an ethnographer I nevertheless glean an important maxim from this brief section of the novel: in the absence of perfection, one ought not abandon the task at hand, nor smash it to pieces, as does the incensed knight. Having made such a concession, the work – of which there is always an abundance – can continue.

Beatrice, a fellow social science enthusiast, has herself acknowledged the breadth of information needed to deepen this study of second generation immigrants and the extent to which future research must take into consideration the possibility of transformations precipitated by even the most mundane of life experiences. On that frigid

410 Cervantes. Don Quixote of La Mancha. pg. 715
October morning when I first made her acquaintance, Beatrice cogently framed this necessity for extensive additional research when she responded to my project outline with a dry wit I would come to appreciate more as our friendship developed. After explaining the parameters and goals of my ethnography, she slurped down a mouthful of hot cocoa, smacked her lips and said, smiling, “Yikes! That’s a lot to do in a year!” Indeed, perhaps even too much, granted that the lives of my informants will unfold – or rather are unfolding – regardless of the conclusions I may have arrived at in my work. She launched an equally subtle, though no less smarting, critique later in that same conversation when I asked her where (which is to say, geographically) she imagined herself in ten years. Her response was simply, “Ask me in ten years.” Beatrice’s reply here serves as a reminder that negotiations of cultural identity persist into adult life. For Beatrice, and all young second generation immigrants, life course changes are still imminent and thus the question of whether they can reasonably be considered “transnational” may warrant only a provisional answer. As young adults situated at the intersection of multiple systems of cultural power and knowledge, the cultural scripts which they face are likely to proliferate further as they enter the workforce, travel, enter domestic partnerships and start families. How such developments augment, expand or narrow what I have hitherto called a field of alternative transnationalities that second generation immigrants perform is unclear. “Ask me in ten years,” she says, exposing my inquiry as quixotic. Indeed, Don Quixote asks a similarly naïve question of Ginés de Pasamonte’s first manifestation, whose autobiography the knight seems keen on reading, for he is an avid bookworm. “Is it finished yet?” The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte, is, of course, never finished. “How can it be finished,” Ginés retorts, “when my life isn’t finished yet?” I detect a trace of his rejoinder in Beatrice’s subtle criticism of my overzealous expectations for my ethnography. Her commentary throughout this text articulates, above all, the need for further research.

For example, how factors of class, race, religion, education and gender intersect with and transform the transnational practices and identities of the immigrant second generation deserve closer attention. In many cases, societal taboos on these subjects proved difficult for my informants to surmount, and more than once several amongst them abandoned a train of thought, having judged that certain topics were “not politically
Moreover, this ethnography is limited by its geographic and demographic scope. Studies of second generation immigrant youth of different nationalities are necessary to expand the range of available anthropological and sociological data and to test, develop or discard the working theories I have proposed. As I have suggested, these studies must also be longitudinal in order to account for future transformations, for what is most lacking in my own work is not only its demographic scale and variety but its temporal purview. To write from a moment is to sacrifice breadth of scope for texture and depth. So too does the ethnographic enterprise forfeit such methodological breadth in favor of offering a detailed cross section of social and cultural phenomena at the level of the individual. Hence, further interdisciplinary work will be necessary if transnational studies wishes to refocus its critical lens on the second generation. However, in assuming a new object of study, disciplines devoted to the research of transnationalism should remain attentive to the generational interplay and transmission, however fluid, of values, cultural practices and national solidarities. The knowledge and experiences of first generation immigrants do not cease to serve an important function in the study of subsequent generations. For example, future research should take into account racial, religious and national diversity of first generation couples and spouses insofar as such diversity may contribute to or diminish the continuity of transnational social ties and cultural practices amongst their second generation children.

These suggestions for the forthcoming study of second generation immigrants are meant, in part, to demonstrate the complexity and scale of the task at hand. In fact, the purpose if this ethnography is precisely to call attention to its own shortcomings, in order to provide a point of departure for more research. Though existing theories regarding the development of transnationalism and transnationality amongst a foreign born second generation have been largely anticipatory, the predictions of researchers and scholars tend to underestimate the potential for radical change. The field of possibility, I assert, is much more complicated than these predictions seem willing to acknowledge. In response, I hope to have effectively called attention to some of the novel phenomena which transnational studies may need to embrace should it decide to include the second generation in its disciplinary domain. Levitt asserts that “in [the] era of globalization,

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transnational lifestyles may become not the exception but the rule"
however, the lives of second generation youth explored in this project seem to resist, for the most part, categorization as “transnational.” Thus, if transnational lifestyles have, as Levitt says, become something of a socio-cultural “norm,” the study of second generation immigrants may interrogate normative assumptions regarding the phenomenon called “transnationalism,” and even challenge the usefulness of the term itself. Though my work is by no means comprehensive, it may function as a preliminary evaluation of the efficacy of a codified disciplinary nomenclature for describing new social and cultural phenomena. Most importantly, this ethnography has explored, rather than definitively untangled or demystified, a complex object of study in order to call attention to the potential of the immigrant second generation as such. How the field will continue to transform as second generation immigrants like Amanda, Anselmo, Beatrice and Tiabe come of age is both intriguing to consider and difficult to predict. The discipline itself might take Beatrice’s advice and “ask again in ten years.” In the mean time, there is much study and research to be done.

_The Second Generation In Theory_

As for the theories of second generation immigrant identity development that I entertain in my work, these are not meant depict the experiences of second generation immigrants as an ”identity crisis,” though my informants have often described it as such. Rather, my use of post-structural and post-colonial theory (see Chapter V Reconciling Reasonable Differences) aims at providing a means of better understanding and articulating the unique dilemmas of subjectivity that second generation immigrants may face and why these circumstances may engender the aforementioned multiplicity of alternative transnationalities. Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a way of approaching "identity" that acknowledges a degree of subjective agency in a process of "self-making" rather than conceding that the “subject” is wholly determined by social structure and cultural conventions. Bringing his delicate hammer down on the fantasy of complete self-determining autonomy, Foucault, whose work in many places overlaps

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412 Levitt, _The Transnational Villagers_. pg. 4.
with Butler’s, calls attention to the limits that institutions and discourses place on subjectivity, generating normative scripts that allow or deny specific performances of identity. In conjunction, Butler and Foucault’s work illuminates the complexity of “subjectivity” at the junction of discourse and performance, of scripts written and scripts read. When, however, these discourses are myriad and do not cooperate in their criteria of evaluating "authenticity" - when, in other words, "authenticity,” understood as representative of a discursive field, "shifts" contextually - the location of subjectivity at their intersection is arguably more precarious and performance more schizophrenic. This superabundance of inconsistent cultural discourses and modes of cultural identity performance is, perhaps, best considered through the theoretical lenses of linguistics, of discourse analysis and of post colonial studies. On the one hand, Sakai’s reinterpretation of Jakobsonian linguistics offers a method of reading entire fields of discursivity as “shifters,” demonstrating how scripts that define cultural “authenticity” are only contextually constituted. On the other hand, Bhabha's theory of mimicry serves as a means of conceptualizing how the reading and performing of many, competing cultural scripts is both an inventive and constructive process, articulating certain cultural identities and standards of cultural "authenticity," while simultaneously subverting the notion of cultural identity as "essential" and exposing cultural identity itself as more malleable than fixed, more reiterative than reified. Multiple mimicries, with recourse to shifting discourses of cultural “authenticity,” perhaps amplify this exposure, making “identity” a more consciously performative affair. As a result, a multiplicity of cultural identities may arise from this interstice between performance and pedagogy, from the constant negotiation of “self-making” in the context of so many different scripts. Among these, what has been called “transnationality” might indeed “take place,” although, as I have endeavored to illustrate in my ethnographic work, this is not always the case. The “common” element of the second generation experience, I argue, is not any single category of identity or mode of cultural identification, but rather the circumstances that provide for the proliferation of identities. The interstice is fertile ground for the dissemination of modes of relation to the self.

These are theories that I explore and more fully develop in the following section, which serves as an unconventional conclusion to this ethnography. By “unconventional,”
I mean to call attention to the manner in which this “conclusion” betrays its designation as such in several different ways. Firstly, this conclusion does not serve as a tidy resolution and may in fact churn up more questions than it answers. I assure the reader that expectations of any such dénouement will likely be cause for disappointment. The “conclusion” of my work is more a point of departure than a terminus. Secondly, by calling this conclusion “unconventional” I hope to better convey its target. My intention is to demonstrate how the experiences of second generation immigrants articulated in this ethnography offer a new perspective on several of the theoretical foundations of transnational studies and perhaps cast new light on some of the discursive concepts that structure disciplinary dialogue. Thirdly, the term “unconventional” serves as means of preparing the reader for the particular style of this final section, which does not adhere closely to any one mode of writing but rather jumps between various registers. Just as this ethnography has been a collaboration of many voices, so too do I intend for its conclusion to be polyvocal.
Having arrived at something like a conclusion, I find it appropriate to briefly approach “transnationalism” and “transnationality” from an alternative vantage point. These terms not only describe particular social and cultural practices, but also indicate a way of imagining the world and individuals in it. The concepts and theories that produce the terminology associated with transnational and diaspora studies are not, in other words, latent in the phenomena that they explore, but rather serve as a more or less effective means of coming terms with the complexity of an epoch. “Transnationalism” is, among other things, a lens through which we make sense of exceedingly complex lives and events that transpire across borders and between cultures or societies. Likewise, “transnationality” furnishes us with a way of grasping and articulating the development of identities within this complexity, which is to say, how individuals who live and act transnationally relate to and imagine themselves. More importantly, just as the phenomena which the terms “transnationalism” and “transnationality” attempt to describe and organize are subject to change, so too must the “lens” itself and the theories it produces shift accordingly.

I have hitherto discussed the emergence of a new object of study, albeit a problematic one, and several novel phenomena that more or less resist straightforward categorization within the contemporary discourse of transnational studies. I have, in other words, approached the generational transformations of transnationalism and transnationality in practice, but I have not yet properly acknowledged the disciplinary repercussions of these changes, that is, their impact on “transnationalism” and “transnationality” in theory. Indeed, the existing theoretical framework for understanding these phenomena may be in need of revision if the second generation is to be incorporated in its disciplinary scope. This section serves to articulate what such a revision might entail. Similarly, I hope to position the entirety of this ethnography as Homi K. Bhabha situates his own work with respect to the field of post-colonial studies. Bhabha simultaneously stands upon the shoulders of its foremost thinkers and theorists and challenges its concepts and assumptions, some of which are foundational to the
discipline itself. I have a similar intention. I also wish, as does Bhabha, to express the potential of further, more creative interdisciplinary work and borrowing that makes use specifically of theory – literary, linguistic, anthropological etc. – as a means of better understanding the generational transformation of the phenomenon called “transnationalism” and of addressing changes within the discipline that this transformation heralds. I am therefore heavily indebted to Bhabha, who demonstrates the efficacy of theory and the value of creativity for approaching the study of postcolonial society, and in so doing, lays bare a world of far greater complexity than has been previously acknowledged. The world and the communities that transnational studies has sought to better understand, particularly the immigrant second generation, are likewise, I believe, more complicated than they might appear.

Where is “Here” and “There”?  

The terms “here” and “there” represent, perhaps, the most privileged in the discourse of transnational studies and have arguably enjoyed pride of place as referents in disciplinary literature, social science research and political projects alike. The purpose of this terminology is not simply to provide semantic substitutes for “homeland” and “hostland” but, more importantly, to invoke metaphorically the exchange between particular locales, that transnationalism as a phenomenon entails. Thus, in describing a particular transnational process, the terms themselves may be deployed separately, with “here” usually to denoting the “receiving” country of actors in transnational exchange,

“there” more often denoting the “sending” country these actors immigrated from, and

“here and there”
invoking the less emplaced interchange between these two locales. In this sense, “here” and “there” are references to easily discernible places or communities which are connected by processes that transcend the boundaries of both, processes that transpire “here and there.” As a means of conceptualizing the simultaneity of connection that the latter entails, transnational studies often employs a social field perspective, which calls attention to the complexity of interconnection – “here and there” – without conceding the significance of place – “here” and “there” – in the lives of transnational immigrants. This is a claim most cogently articulated by Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller who assert that “locating migrants within transnational social fields makes clear that incorporation in a new state and enduring transnational attachments are not binary opposites.”\textsuperscript{413} They liken the migrant experience instead to a “gauge” that “pivots between a new land and a transnational connection.”\textsuperscript{414} Though, in one sense, the concept of social fields interrogates “neat divisions of connection into local, national, transnational, and global,” Levitt and Glick Schiller acknowledge that “all are local in that near and distant connections penetrate the daily lives of individuals lived within a locale.”\textsuperscript{415} The interconnectivity of the transnational social field may be exceedingly complex and multifaceted, but “here” and “there” still have recourse to particular locales.

For example, in the case of my father and the trans-border social and economic transactions in which he engages, “here” is Boston Massachusetts and “there” is São Luis Brazil, his country of residence and his ancestral homeland respectively. He boards an airplane at Logan International Airport and disembarks a day later at the Aeroporto Marechal Cunha Machado. In Boston, he licks and seals an envelope of crisp checks and delivers it to the United States Postal Service just three blocks from his home. The same envelope arrives at his father’s house on São Luis in a week’s time. My father’s computer, sitting on his office desk, translates and transmits data into radio waves which a router receives, decodes and shuttles through cyberspace. Many of miles south, fiber-optic cables register an incoming Skype chat request – which my grandmother accepts –

\textsuperscript{413} Levitt and Glick Schiller. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society.” pg. 1011.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., pg. 1010.
and thousands of pixels rearrange and organize as my father’s face crystallizes on her computer screen. No matter how complicated these processes of interconnection may be – no matter, in other words, the complexity of living “here and there” – Boston and São Luis – “here” and “there” – persist as definable locales, “nodes” in a transnational network, places in transnational social space.

Nevertheless, these terms – “here” and “there” – are also deployed in transnational scholarship in another, more abstract register, namely as a means of describing “transnationality” – which is to say, transnational consciousness and identity – as a process of subjective relation and combination between symbolic elements of homeland and hostland culture and society. As Stephen Vertovec aptly observes, transnational scholarship is rife with “depictions of individuals’ awareness of being ‘here and there,” thus associating transnational “identity” or “being” with a simultaneous subjective connection or negotiation between two nations. In their own characterization of transnationality, Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton-Blanc recognize a similar subjective reconciliation, asserting that “the majority [of transnational immigrants] seem to maintain identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation.” If being “here and there” therefore entails a degree of hybridity, to what exactly “here” and “there” refer is much less clear and attempts at defining their referents are, at best, abstractions. Provided that they refer to homeland and hostland culture, for example, and thus “hybridity” indicates a blending of cultural elements, discerning what constitutes a national “culture” is still an onerous endeavor. Unlike places – bounded geographical regions – or communities – emplaced social bodies – cultures are not so easily definable. For instance, to speak of Brazilian “culture” is more often an invocation of many different values, practices and traditions rather than simply “capoeira” or “tambor de crioula.” American “culture” is, perhaps, an even more ambiguous and elusive target. Even to utter the name of a nation – “Brazil,” for example – is to requisition this matrix of cultural associations, and to speak of “The United States” likewise conjures an array of different cultural elements that are not easily reducible to a single concept. In cases such as these, “nation” and “culture” may be subject to a degree

416 Vertovec, Steven. “Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism.” pg. 450.
417 Ibid.
418 tambor de crioula; An Afro-Brazilian dance practiced in São Luis, my father’s home city.
of conflation, though to the field of analogies to which the invocation of a nation refers is equally as diverse. Thus, in the context of disciplinary scholarship and dialogue that focuses on matters of transnational identity, “here” and “there” are more often representative of discursive fields of practices, values and traditions which, as aggregates, render “cultures” or “nations” identifiable. In other words, the scholarly representation – be it in text or speech – of any particular case of transnationality always has recourse to the fields of discursivity that delimit its constituent cultures or nations.

However, when confronted with any discursive system, one must always ask: who or what sets its limits and decides its content? Who or what, in other words, represents its author? Indeed, to claim that transnationality entails a certain cultural hybridity requires that one not only carefully identify the fields of discursivity that define its component “cultures” or “nations” but also acknowledge the positionality and authority of the speaker who invokes that discursive field. When I ask my father, for example, to describe or define Brazilian “culture,” he articulates a certain field of associations and conjures certain images which will differ – perhaps greatly, perhaps only slightly – from my own, supposing he asks me the same question. Hence, to claim that my father maintains an identity that simultaneously connects him to two cultures and two nations, my assertion has or should have recourse to his interpretation of Brazilian culture and his attachment to symbolic elements of Brazil, as the fields of discursivity that delimit nation and culture – which is to say, what conceptually “here” and “there” represent – are highly positional. This is, of course, why ethnography serves as the favored social scientific methodology for the study of culture and cultural identity, as it relies partially on “native” exegesis to define the discursive limits and content of a given “culture.” The logic of the ethnographic enterprise affirms that the discursive field which represents a “culture” is best articulated from position of an “insider,” and thus the work of the ethnographer has traditionally been that of “chronicler” and, more recently, that of humbly positional exposition.

For the purposes of anthropological research within the domain of transnational studies, especially those focused on transnational identity, “here” and “there,” insofar as

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they represent particular fields of discourse associated with particular cultures or nations, are therefore best defined through ethnographic accounts that privilege the voices and authority of trans-migrants when delimiting what values, practices and traditions fall within the domain of their culture and their nation, or rather, nations and cultures. Ethnographic work defers to the voices of transnationals in order to better understand, for example, how one can be culturally “British and something else”\textsuperscript{420} and what culturally that entails. As a result, the current disciplinary literature and scholarship of transnational studies has amassed a great number of different “native” commentaries and reflections on “transnationality” each of which distinctly articulates what precisely constitutes the distinct cultures and nations that are “simultaneously maintained.” Given that the majority of transnational scholarship to date has focused on first generation immigrants, “here” and “there” have therefore been deployed as symbolic referents for “cultures” or “nations” as discursively defined by first generation transnationals. What is/are your culture(s)? What is/are your nation(s)? Difficult questions indeed, but questions which the discipline asks frequently of the trans-migrants it studies. The answer, or answers, have, perhaps, provided the groundwork for the theoretical terminology that the discipline now uses to describe transnationality, which is to say, the accepted transnational ontology “being here and there.”

When the same questions are asked of second generation immigrants, a unique dilemma arises. What is/are your culture(s)? What is/are your nations? For my informants, “Brazil” and “The United States” still represent fields of discourse, which is to say, clusters of national and cultural associations; however, as this ethnography has endeavored to demonstrate, these clusters shift about radically, deriving their integrity only in context. Brazil and Brazilian culture are alternatively represented by various discourses, some generated by nostalgic parents and others by popular media stereotypes, all of which claim authority as “authentic.” Similarly, the United States may be discursively portrayed as culturally sterile or as providing opportunity through effective integration and sublimation of cultural differences. The aforementioned questions therefore elicit a problematic answer. What is/are your culture(s)? What is/are your nations? The common response, at least from my informants, seems to be: In what

\textsuperscript{420} Vertovec, Steven. “Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism.” pg. 450.
context? If such are the inquiries that ground our understanding of transnationality, have this analytical framework and its theoretical terminology reached their limits in the study of second generation immigrants? Can the contingency of cultural and national identity articulated by my informants be effectively captured in the expression of transnationality as being “here and there,” when “here” and “there” never solidify as discursive fields but perpetually shift? Moreover, if this terminology is tailored to best describe the transmigrant experience, how can its possibly serve to ground the study of subsequent immigrant generations without simultaneously obfuscating their distinct subjective experience? How, in other words, can we approach the second generation from disciplinary vantage point that defines “transnationality” as being “here and there” without first facing the limits of such an ontological assumption?

In this sense, the discipline of transnational studies faces a crossroads, beyond which point change may be inevitable. If second generation immigrants are accepted as “transnationals” the notion that “transnationality” signifies being “here and there” – where “here” and “there” refer symbolically to cultures or nations as discursively defined by transnationals – may prove to be an incomplete ontology. Indeed, “here” and “there” are no longer easily locatable as stable discursive fields, but are rather contextually constituted. Alternatively, if transnational studies wishes to preserve this particular ontological argument, if being “here and there” remains the privileged conceptualization of transnational identity, then the discipline may have to surrender second generation immigrants as a demographic of study. Though the metaphysics of “being here and there” may still serve to effectively describe the subjective experience of trans-migrants, it may disguise the complex subjectivity of second generation immigrants for whom “here” and “there” are discursive abstractions of cultures and nations that never consolidate and thus allow only contextual assertions of cultural and national identity.

This last assertion does, however, raises several important questions: Don’t first generation immigrants confront similarly abundant discursive representations of both their sending and receiving nations and cultures? I find it useful to recast the terms of these questions using Bhabha’s theoretical lexicon which borrows several important concepts from the domain of literary theory. Bhabha also speaks of cultures and nations as discursive constructs, but refers to them as “narratives” in order to call attention the
manner in which any nation or culture as such is therefore subject to a degree of “dissemination”\(^{421}\) or plurisignification;\(^{422}\) nations and cultures, according to Bhabha, can be interpreted in many ways. The ingenuity of this deconstructive perspective notwithstanding, the element of Bhabha’s argument that proves most appropriate for our purposes is simply the alleged analogy of nations and cultures to narratives, a comparison which preserves the notion that these abstract concepts entail entire discursive fields and simultaneously calls attention to how these discursive constructs shape identity. Thus, the various terms I have heretofore employed to refer to the discursivity of culture and nation – representations, fields of discourse, scripts etc. – can be gathered in the term “narrative,” provided that narratives are written, circulated and read (which is to say, interpreted) and can therefore describe the formation of identity in both the pedagogical and performative register.

The many cultural and national “narratives” which I have described in this ethnography, all of which purport to authentically represent Brazil and Brazilian culture, are not exclusively directed towards second generation Brazilians, but towards all Brazilian immigrants regardless of generational status. The American media, for example, assails both first and second generation immigrants with its particular discursive claims as to the nature of “authentic” Brazilian culture. So too might first generation immigrants find themselves met with alternative “narratives” that call for alternative performances of “authentic” cultural identity when they return home to their ancestral homeland. Furthermore, considering the increasingly global proliferation of American media imagery, Brazilians who never left Brazil may likewise be exposed to a multiplicity of exotified narrative representations of their own country as a land of leisure and hedonism. By this logic, the terms of engagement, or rather, the conditions for the negotiation and reconciliation of these competing “narratives” would arguably be generationally analogous. For both first and second generation immigrants, national and cultural “narratives” are superabundant and thus “here” and “there” are similarly tied to context. Insofar as cultural or national identity can be interpreted as identification with

one or another of these variable narratives, these observations appear to dissolve our attempts at theorizing a distinctive second generation immigrant ontology.

Nevertheless, there are certain kinds of narratives that accrue a particular significance and in so doing eclipse others that contend for the title of authenticity. As has been articulated most notably by historian Mircea Eliade, “myths of origin” have this sort of privileged presence, as they qualify certain rituals and practices as “sacred” which might otherwise seem quotidian.423 In quite the same way, certain narrative accounts of nations and cultures may accumulate this same authority and it is precisely this tendency that Bhabha attempts to highlight, in his keen reading of Frantz Fanon’s essay *On national culture*, when he asserts that national narratives “attempt to hark back to a ‘true’ national past, which is often represented in reified forms.”424 For Bhabha, cultural identity “takes place” in the interstice between the pedagogical representation of originary national culture and the process of self-making that erases its presence. However, Bhabha’s analysis tends to cast the function of etiology in the negative light of nationalist discourse, privileging the performative elements of cultural identity that deconstruct the unity of “national culture.” His is assertion that the Western nation is an “obscure and ubiquitous form of living the locality of culture”425 may quietly pass over the role of “origin myths” as firm, unflinching scaffolds for those who wander, the nomadic nationals, those who live “here and there.” Indeed, transnationals often individually or collectively clutch founding narrative representations of cultures and nations they left behind, if only temporarily, as a means of preserving these symbolic places and practices in what Eliade calls “mythical time.” These are narratives that solidify, that acquire pride of place, that reduce all other narratives to mere representations and, most importantly, establish “a place that is sacred above all.”426 I assert that these are the narratives which distinguish the first generation from the second. Thus, in order articulate, in the conclusion of this ethnography, what I believe to be the paramount difference between the transnationality of first generation immigrants and the

424 Bhabha. *The Location of Culture.* pg. 208.
425 Ibid., pg. 218.
complex and confusing negotiation of narratives that may constitute the second generation experience, I must finally discuss “beginnings.”

**Approaching Beginnings as a Means of Ending**

*If transnationalism were construed of as a narrative, how would it begin? A traditional narrative of immigration would certainly begin with a departure of sorts. Immigrants *leave* their ancestral homelands, bound for unfamiliar shores.*

**immigrant**: noun

a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

Biology an animal or plant living or growing in a region to which it has migrated.

The notion of initiation, of inauguration and of commencement would seem to have a similar counterpart in the context of transnationalism which likewise “begins” with a departure. However, though these narratives arguably “embark” on similar terms, they will eventually diverge drastically from each other. Indeed narratives also have “endings,” which, in the context many early narratives of migration, often entail homecomings. These may be both symbolic or actual, as immigrants may eventually return home to their sending countries once turmoil and disorder have subsided, or they might alternatively discover a “new” home in their receiving country in which case a “homecoming” is more metaphorical than literal. However, “endings,” in the context of the transnational narrative, are slightly more problematic. If the aforementioned symmetry of the two narratives’ respective “beginnings” were to be conserved in their “endings,” then the “end,” or homecoming, of the transnational narrative would arguably annul its very being a distinctly *transnational* narrative. There is always the sense that a coherent “ending,” in the case of transnationalism, is indefinitely deferred, a notion perhaps best captured by the transnational social field perspective, which calls attention to the continued circulation of transnational actors between host and home countries. What seems more plausible, at least when coming to grips with transnationalism in such a literary fashion, is that a transnational narrative “begins” with an *unconventional*
departure from one nation and an *unconventional* arrival in a new one, at least with regards to traditional narratives of immigration. Likewise, in transnational scholarship, particularly social science research, the determinants of transnationalism are in many ways encapsulated by the circumstances – political, social, and economic – of an immigrant or immigrant communities’ exit from and entry into their sending and receiving countries respectively. Now, if these markers – the exceptional conditions of departure and the exceptional conditions of arrival – indicate the potential “beginning” of a transnational narrative, then second generation immigrants pose a distinct problem for transnational studies. Second generation immigrants neither “exit” a sending country – in the sense of an actual or symbolic “departure” – nor do they truly “enter” a receiving country – in the sense of an actual or symbolic “arrival” – for as I have observed, in many cases second generation immigrants are not born *into* the society or culture of their parents’ host nation, but rather into a sort of liminal space, marked off from dominant national culture and social form. This liminal zone may be a quite extensive. Amanda’s “transnational village,” for example, represents a vast Brazilian community that is neither *in Brazil* nor completely *in the United States* insofar as it attempts to recreate a specific cross-section of Brazilian social life and structure. Alternatively, this interstitial space may be purely domestic, manifest in family life that is explicitly set apart from host land culture and society. Anselmo, for example, describes having been raised in a household that was “distinctly not American,” as if his own home were a relic of his parents’ homeland, set adrift in the United States. Supposing this to be the case – if, in other words, second generation immigrants are indeed born into a sort of liminal cultural, social and national space – than the second generation immigrant narrative cannot be said to have the same “beginning” as the first generation transnational narrative. In fact, it does not seem unreasonable to claim that second generation immigrants have *no* “beginning” or “origin,” at least in the literary sense of these terms.

With such a discrepancy between first and second generation “beginnings” or “origins” thus established, another, more important, question arises: *What’s so meaningful, about “beginnings” and “origins?”* This appears to be, at first, a rather

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opaque line of inquiry. However, “beginnings” are imbued with symbolic meaning, certainly in literature, and arguably in the context of immigration and transnationalism. For a literary referent, one need only turn to the Roman and Greek epics, in which “beginnings” or “origins” serve powerful narrative functions.

It is Troy, his homeland, that Aeneas carries with him on his wandering journey through the Mediterranean, and the Roman Empire, through Virgil’s *Aeneid*, locates its own origins in the moment of Aeneas’ departure from his fallen city, bound for Italian shores. Likewise, in the Homeric epics, specifically *The Odyssey*, “beginnings” enjoy similar literary privilege. It is perhaps the symbolic absence of a “beginning” from the text – which is to say, Homer's omission of Odysseus' departure from Ithaca for Troy from lines of the poem itself – that makes his homecoming all the more necessary, and thus the function of the "beginning" or "origin" all the more integral to the structure of the narrative. The law of return, the economy of homecoming or *oikonomia*,\footnote{Derrida, Jacques. *Given Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992. pg 6-7. The term “economy” has its own origins in the combination of the Greek *oikos*, meaning “the household,” “house,” or “family,” and *nomos*, meaning “law,” “rule” or “norm.”} expresses, albeit belatedly, the importance of an “origin” to the unfolding and felicitous conclusion of the poem. Classical scholar Paulo Vivante notes the importance of Odysseus’ “day of return,” calling his homecoming “a ripening moment” that “casts significance over the whole course of time”\footnote{Vivante, Paolo. *The Homeric Imagination; A Study of Homer's Poetic Perception of Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1970, pg. 145.} and literary critic Charles H. Taylor Jr. calls the roving king “a centripetal hero,”\footnote{Taylor, Charles H. *Essays on the Odyssey, Selected Modern Criticism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1963, pg. 88.} whose urge is always to return home.

I have not here invoked the works of Homer and Virgil arbitrarily, for the wandering heroes of their ancient epics are not so dissimilar from the contemporary protagonists of the immigrant and transnational narratives of migration. In fact, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* arguably represent the first narratives of migration, depicting men scattered by turmoil, bound for distant shores and facing obstacles to their departure, various hitches in transit, and profound impediments upon arrival to familiar and unfamiliar lands.\footnote{Alexopoulou, Mariギ. *The Theme of Returning Home in Ancient Greek Literature: The Nostos of the Epic Heroes*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2009.} Aeneas and Odysseus bear witness to a dispersion of peoples and
cultures during the Bronze Age Collapse, and the poets’ account of the aftermath of the Trojan War, a period contemporary to the collapse of Mycenaean society, describes a particular brand of travelling hero, men returning from the war certainly, but men with only the memory of “home” – be it Odysseus’ day dreams of Ithaca or Aeneas’ father, his genealogy, carried symbolically on his back – to ease their yearning. They are nostalgic heroes, warriors empowered and afflicted by memories of homes lost – whether through voluntary departure or violent expulsion – and compelled by the possibility of homecoming, of nostos. 432

Is it not Ithaca that Odysseus sees as he “[turns] his face…time and again…towards the radiant sun, anxious for it to set, yearning now to be gone and home once more?” 433 Is it not the memory of homeland for which he pines despite the luxury and sensuous pleasure he has discovered on the cliffs of Circe’s isle? Does he not yearn for Penelope’s embrace despite the plague of suitors which has fallen upon his house and upon his queen? Are not Aeneas’ comforting words also those of profound and preservative nostalgia as he consoles his weather-beaten men, assuring them of “a peaceful homeland, [and] a new Trojan kingdom,” 434 a nostos beyond the waves and past the gale? In their nostalgia, memories of homeland – the symbolic “beginnings” or “origins” of their narratives – and the possibility of return, are latent and thus preserved. It is memory, then, that serves as their compass, as their guide through “[voyages], fraught with hardship” that takes them across a vast Mediterranean, “churning [its] water white with stroke on stroke.” 435 It is memory that carries them across the precarious landscapes of the known world, towards home. So too does Homer, the poet, share in such nostalgia, for his very articulation of Odysseus’ journey codifies in memory a period of time characterized by the movement people from place to place. And Virgil also, in tracing the passage of Aeneas from Troy to the shores of Italy, memorializes this ancient history of scattered peoples, of wandering heroes and of homelands lost and found. Might we say the same of contemporary immigrants and transnationals? Bhabha argues that “beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fi

de siècle, we find ourselves in a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity”\(^\text{436}\); does this mean, however, that origins are not still privileged by those in transit? Might we claim that memory continues to serve a critical function in their own narratives, despite the circumstances – felicitous or infelicitous, forced or voluntary, permanent or indefinite – of their departure from ancestral shores and their arrival on unfamiliar ones? This is certainly the case for my father, who like many transnational immigrants “exited” his own country and “entered” a new one on uncertain terms, unsure of when or if he might make his return. Now, the memory of São Luis, though he lives “here” and “there,” still provides solace for my father, and peace of mind. And, though he often “visits” his family in Brazil, these sojourns are not his nostos, for in many ways the “homeland” preserved in his memory no longer exists.

Together my father and I watch images of his country flash across the television screen in a commercial aimed at ensnaring prospective tourists, and I ask him whether that is the real Brazil. Certainly not. The video of scantily clad Carnival dancers spliced together with action sequences of famous Brazilian footballers and fly-over shots of Rio is nothing to him but “American propaganda.”\(^\text{437}\) This is not his Brazil. Nor is his Brazil the sedentary reality disguised behind the glossy vista of the Copa Cabana. In fact, I cannot give an account of his Brazil. I have never visited that place, nor will I ever.

“When I remember Brazil,” he takes off his glasses, for the object he will attempt to describe cannot be seen more clearly through bifocal lenses, “I remember scenes of my childhood. I remember my mother and my father. And I remember their lives and my own, the way it was. The way they were.”\(^\text{438}\) My father’s Brazil is a memory of Brazil, and he carries that memory with him always. Though, the country to which he periodically returns may transform drastically, this artifact of memory is unchanging. His homeland’s politics may shift, for better or for worse; yet, my father is forever vigilant in his subtle distrust of government. Decades of military dictatorship and its sinister chicanery are not so easily forgotten, nor can the promises of politicians ever outgrow that poisonous past. The dirt road approaching his father’s house may be paved over, the

\(^{436}\) Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, pg. 2.

\(^{437}\) Personal Communication

\(^{438}\) Personal Communication
potholes filled in, and the invading flora beaten back to the fringes of the pavement; but, his memories of that place will be forever engulfed in a swirling cloud of red dust. The skyline of São Luis may surge upwards as skyscrapers consume ramshackle cabins and cottages; nevertheless, he recalls the regal architecture of a city still brooding in its colonial past. Tides at Araçagi and Panaquatira may churn up trash and refuse, and my father may be confined to the very periphery of the beach, where sand meets grassy bluffs, forced to share this sliver of land with garrulous bar-folk. No matter. He summons memories of tranquil seashores and an ocean horizon calm but for old dingies bobbing in the waves and the faint arabesques of fishing lines sweeping across the water. Street vendors and fresh seafood markets may be ousted by fast food chains and shopping malls, and the smell of frying fish might be trounced by the odor of French fries and the leviathan perfumeries of shiny department stores; but, my father will cast about forgotten alleys of his island and roam through crumbling corridors of dilapidated districts until he finds treasures and delicacies all but effaced by the sprawling metropolis that has cropped up in center of the isle.

When these emergent places and spaces – these new narratives – launch their lightning raids on my father’s Brazil, memory furnishes him with an impregnable bastion behind which the grotesqueries and noisiness fade to a faint murmur, and the rhythmic throbbing of nostalgia takes him “home.” These immutable memories, those remembrances that provoke such profound longing, are perhaps also the source of his sense of coherent identity. In moments of existential anguish, bereft of direction, and beset on all sides by alternative representations of his nation and culture, he remembers this “authentic” Brazil, the Brazil that raised him, the Brazil that represents his own “beginning.” Like Aeneas, who bears the weight of Troy upon his back and within his own identity as the progenitor of the Roman people, my father carries with him always the “authentic” Brazil. When he has doubts, when he feels set adrift in unfamiliar waters, when he cannot locate himself in the complicated transnational landscape of his life, he need only recall his own “beginnings.” He need only remember.

How different the dilemma faced by the second generation appears to me to be. We never left, nor did we arrive and thus our nostos, our return, is itself an impossibility.

439 Personal Communication
We have no nostalgic claim to “homeland” and no original memory through which its image might be preserved. Our “beginnings,” our “origins,” cannot be codified so coherently in our minds, nor fixed to immutable memories. And provided such memories serve as a sort of compass rose for locating the “self” in reference to an “authentic” vision of an ancestral homeland, are we not faced with a more complicated task of navigation?

We are, perhaps, a different kind of wandering hero. We are nostalgic, certainly; but when, like Odysseus, we turn our faces to the setting Sun, how fragmented our vision of “homeland” seems to be. Ours is a kaleidoscope vision, while Odysseus sees Ithaca as if through a telescopic lens. How might we feel, as does Aeneas, the weight of our lineage, our genealogies, resting upon our shoulders when, in so many ways, we did not depart with them slung across our backs, nor did we carry them across the earth, preserving them, nourishing them faithfully along our way? Indeed, our conditions of departure and arrival are somewhat enigmatic, a mirage upon the horizon. “Here” and “there” appear to us as many mutating signposts, pointing always in different directions, towards different representations of “home.”

Perhaps we bear more resemblance to Don Quixote than to Odysseus or Aeneas, though by advising this comparison I do not mean to suggest that we are quixotic. Nor by invoking second generation immigrants as “we” do I intend to speak for all second generation immigrants, only those who may similarly feel –as most of my informants have expressed –and ambiguity of “origins” that Don Quixote shares. His genealogy is similarly fragmented, his “beginning” likewise ambiguous and his identity also assembled piecemeal. Cervantes omits the knight’s lineage from his text, while Odysseus appears always to us as “the great glory of the Achaeans” and Aeneas as “the lord of the Trojans,” only briefly is the knight’s surname brought to our attention and is hastily discounted as “[having] very little to do with our story.” That Don Quixote may be a knight –and a nameless man no more –requires that he cobble together a name, a history, and his own adventure from many accounts of “knight errantry,” from many tales of the noble paragons of knightly virtue, written by many hands. All that is available to him as means of self-making is this library: a multiplicity of narratives and tales of

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440 Homer. *The Odyssey.*
442 Cervantes, Saavedra Miguel De, and Walter Starkie. *Don Quixote of La Mancha.* pg. 57.
chivalric romance. These are the pieces from which the nameless man must construct himself. Perhaps our adventures, like the knight’s, will be “a deciphering of the world: a diligent search over the entire surface of the earth for the forms that will prove that what the books say is true” or indeed false. But the world through which Don Quixote thus wanders is forever changing, transforming, mutating, like pages of a book flapping in the wind. Windmills become giants and barber’s basins become helmets. Everything is subject to change.

Likewise, within the discipline of transnational studies, transformation is in the air. The field rests delicately on the cusp of a generational divide and must be prepared to accommodate alternative possibilities. Don Quixote and Cervantes, author and character, cross a similar boundary line. As Michel Foucault aptly observes in his book *The Order of Things*, the knight’s adventures “mark the end of the old interplay between signs and contain the beginning of new relations,” signifying a moment of rupture wherein the border between epochs becomes porous. Meaning is not obliterated by this crossing over. Words are not bereft of their descriptive potential. Rather, the meaning of words is subject suddenly to a degree of slippage, as “the written word and things no longer resemble one another.” All that is certain in *Don Quixote* is that nothing is certain. And as the gaze of transnational studies shifts to the second generation, perhaps a similar slippage should be expected. The topography which the knight traverses as he gallivants about the countryside proves itself to be unsteady terrain; and even those characters for whom the landscape *seems* familiar and quotidian are swept up in the wake of Don Quixote’s adventure, churned about and left disoriented, searching for stable footing. In its tryst with the immigrant second generation, transnational studies also approaches unfamiliar territory. Words and concepts that have been codified in disciplinary discourse may suddenly soften or slip away.

We are not, however, completely lost. We have much scholarship and knowledge with which to chart a course through the unknown. If in my own work I have gently stepped onto virgin soil, I have not done so without the support of a library of knowledge.

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444 Ibid.
445 Ibid.
already at my fingertips, nor have I ventured off without many guiding voices to make the journey a fulfilling one and to bolster me at confusing crossroads. In this sense, my intention is not to turn away from transnational studies or to supplant the concepts “transnationalism” and “transnationality.” Instead, I have sought to offer a provisional survey of more or less uncharted regions of scholarship: geography that resists our tools of navigation, which is to say, the terms which have established the domain of transnational studies as we know it today. My hope is simply to furnish the discipline with snapshots of a transnational phenomenon much more complex, textured and mercurial than has been yet acknowledged. I do not claim this work to be exhaustive, nor can ethnographic work ever be. As such, the young men and women with whom I have shared the road are not meant to serve as typologies in some emerging taxonomic matrix: the brief cross-sections of their unfolding lives that I have managed to represent in my work are meant to remind us simply that, at this generational interstice, in this liminal period, everything is subject to change. And thus, with much more work to be done and new territory to explore, the ethnographic enterprise ends, as always, unfinished.
In the city of São Luis, a house is silent, nestled in a grove of mango trees.

At lunchtime, Act One concludes. Our family convenes here, at the house, returning from assorted workplaces and schoolyards to share a meal. We are a garrulous bunch, and laughter abounds at the table. A debate or two might even arise. We have our fun and fill our bellies to the brim, and once we finish our almoço, exchanging final tender words, something truly magical occurs. What was once a maelstrom of moving parts, the metropolis, a thundering throng of urban folk, seems suddenly still.

The dishes and pots from the midday meal are finally cleaned and set out to dry on damp dishtowels. The dining room table is wiped clean of stray beans and grains of rice and the plastic sheet that protects the tablecloth glistens in artificial splendor. Our family is dispersed throughout the house and scattered about garden, everyone in pursuit of a quiet place to dwell and digest, to hide from the beams of daylight that cut through the thatched roof and canopy of the garden. Heavy food makes for heavy eyelids, and soon no creature is stirring, feral or tame. The world is silent. Even the translucent geckos that skitter across the walls are motionless, like porcelain figurines. Not a sound. Not a word spoken. No wind in the mango trees. In this moment of stillness – a moment we wish would swallow up the whole day – we are released from our labor. Intermission. All are briefly liberated from the performance of daily life. We all float gently in this empty time. Of course, to our great chagrin, São Luis must eventually rumble back to life. Somewhere a car will start or a door will slam, and a cascade of commotion will begin whereby the sprawling city will accelerate into unforgiving motion once more. And as quickly as this moment of impossible serenity arrives, it will disappear into activity. For another day, we will be swept – willingly or not – into the vortex of our profane lives.

It is just as the city settles down for this nap that I find myself exploring my grandfather’s house. Having eaten very little, I find no solace in slumber and I would rather stalk about in the stillness, in the silence, for I know that no one will take notice.

\footnote{446 See Image A}
There are all sorts of treasures here, in this house of riddles. The walls are plastered with puzzles. Few of them can I claim to have unraveled, and most remain, to this day, the great secrets of a world I explore only episodically, mysteries I investigate in brief sojourns. There is a gargantuan key that hangs on the wall in the dining room and by the early afternoon its elaborately crafted bow casts a most unusual shadow. Hoping to ascertain its weight, I reach out to lift it from its mounting, but recoil once my finger tips graze its rough, iron hide. During my silent explorations, caution often overpowers my curiosity, for I would rather let these artifacts remain somewhat enigmatic than suffer the consequences of breaking one. I step prudently away from the key and imagine to what behemoth door it belongs, to what castle or fortress it grants entry. It must weigh at least ten pounds. I always find my mind drifting into folkloric day dreams as I roam my grandfather’s house. I cannot help myself. This place feels so ancient. The rooms time-worn. Generations must have dragged their feet across these floors.

There is also a portrait of a child, sitting above granite-top table a few yards from the giant key, which I find most intriguing. I tiptoe over, careful not to rouse my sleeping kin. I know his face. The boy in the painting is my father’s older brother, the eldest Lima child. He died too young and now watches in silence the passerby, reminding all who live here that once there was another. The paint at the edges of canvas has begun to crack and peel away, but the expression on his angelic face stubbornly resists decay. For his brothers and sister, my uncles and aunt, he is always present at lunch-time, always watching their gaiety from the corner of the room. But when I gaze upon the portrait, I am reminded only of the distance between us, of how even a single generation renders his life utterly alien to me. His hair, parted neatly down the center of his scalp, glistens with petroleum jelly. Not like mine. Mine is unkempt and jets off in many directions. The shirt collar is buttoned tightly around his neck. Not like mine. Mine has no buttons. Mine is stylishly tattered and frayed at its edges. His is pristine, a crisp white against his tanned skin, the color of unbleached linen. From certain angles, in a particular light, the boy disappears completely, and my father suddenly emerges from the abyss of the portrait’s murky backdrop, from the depths of dark green paint. In these moments, when the boy

447 See Image B
448 See Image C
bears such a striking resemblance to my father, when their colors run together, I retreat. I am not startled by the uncanny likeness, only unhappy that I do not see myself in the paint. I always withdraw from the portrait feeling blue. As I turn towards the kitchen, I slide through the narrow passageway between my grandfather’s cupboard of prehistoric wines and spirits, mystic tonics that catch the midday sun and cast a rainbow on the adjacent wall. As I emerge from the corridor, something familiar catches my eye.

Near the door of the kitchen, on a small wooden table, a fictitious friend of mine stands, encased in bronze, his spear raised triumphantly, his skeletal frame proudly stretched to its very limits. Don Quixote, the whimsical self-made knight errant of Cervantes’ imagination, stands, poised for adventure, on this little wooden platform, his presence unbeknownst to me until this very moment. How had I never noticed this little statuette? I run to my father and wake him from his nap. Such brazen disregard for the sacred hour after lunchtime is tantamount to treason in this house, but I must know. I must confirm that this is indeed Don Quixote. My father, roused only to half-consciousness by my demands, confirms that the knight has been standing there, by the kitchen door, for nearly half a century, keeping watch over the house; although, I can’t imagine the madcap chevalier would be of much service in moments of domestic distress, even if he were present in full form. For the decade since I first glossed the pages of Cervantes’ novel, I have failed to notice that the knight had taken up residency in my grandfather’s house, but since I recently returned to that text, he can no longer elude detection. I return hastily to the table. I reach out to touch the bronze statue, but find myself captivated by something else entirely. The man from La Mancha shares the tabletop with several photographs, generations of the Lima family, my genealogy, gathered about him, a wreath of names round the nameless knight.449

449 See Image D
Works Cited


Reading.

All definitions that appear in this text were taken from: