Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools are Shaped by Parental Deportation

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REVERSE MIGRATION: DOCUMENTING HOW THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
OF TRANSNATIONAL YOUTH IN MEXICAN SCHOOLS ARE SHAPED BY PARENTAL
DEPORTATION

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy – Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2017
Dissertation Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

November 14, 2017

This dissertation prepared by

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entitled

Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Research Problem

Over 500,000 U.S.-born children are living in Mexico—some due to parental deportation—experiencing a decrease in their quality of life, the stress of an unfamiliar language and culture, and difficulty accessing education. In order to support them in their transition to Mexico, and to reincorporate them into U.S. society as adults, their struggles and educational trajectories should be of great concern to the Mexican and U.S. governments, as well as higher education institutions.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to document the educational experiences of transnational students attending schools in a border city in northern Mexico due to parental deportation; to investigate the difference in their experiences due to gender; to recognize their critical awareness; and to understand their resistance modes.

Research Questions

How are the educational experiences of transnational youth shaped by parental deportation? In what ways do the educational experiences of transnational students differ due to gender? How does the use of dialogic processes raise the critical consciousness of transnational students? How do transnational youth enact transformational and other types of resistance?

Theoretical Framework

I used transnational feminism (Fernandes, 2013) to situate their experiences in a global socio-political context; dialogic feminism (Puigvert, 2003) to pay special attention to gender, inclusiveness, and power dynamics; and Coyolxauhqui imperative (Anzaldúa, 2015), to discuss the possible transformation of trauma into healing.
Methodology

I used a critical communicative methodology that favors egalitarian dialogue in order to understand and transform reality. Nine transnational students ages 9-17, three mothers, and one government coordinator participated in this study. Data were collected through pre and post interviews, testimonios, focus groups, and observations, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings

The major obstacle transnational students face is the difference in educational systems and teaching practices, followed by unsafe conditions in Mexico, lack of academic Spanish proficiency, and loss of basic social rights. Deportation posed the added burden of stigmatization and exclusion. Gendered violence and female disempowerment had a negative effect on female students and, although participants engaged in social critique in our guided discussions, they also displayed a lack of oppression awareness. Additionally, participants became empowered by collective support and active healing, enacting their agency by engaging in resilient resistance through academic success. Unexpectedly, harsh U.S. immigration policies prompted the Mexican government to expedite the access of transnational students to social services, including education. Finally, having a transnational-sensitive teacher was the single most effective factor to facilitate their transition into the Mexican school system, elucidating the need for the incorporation of a border pedagogy and transnational teacher education to support culturally diverse students in the borderlands, especially along the U.S./Mexico border.

Keywords: transnational students, parental deportation, transnational feminism, dialogic feminism, Coyolxauhqui imperative, critical communicative methodology, active healing, curación activa
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the scholars of color who opened the door of possibilities for me, without them, I would have not had the inspiration to pursue this doctoral program.

I am indebted to my chair and mentor, Dr. Christine Clark, who believed in me so fiercely, that she left me no choice but to see myself through her eyes. Mil gracias.

I am thankful to my committee members, Dr. Anita Revilla, Dr. Katrina Liu, Dr. Denise Dávila, Dr. Norma Marrun, and especially Dr. Christine Clark for your continued support, feedback, and guidance, but above all, for your enthusiastic response to my research.

I am grateful to my CSIEME cohort, particularly my closest colleagues and friends. Your love and care during difficult times carried me through.

Doy gracias a mi madre, que se encargó de que mi familia estuviera bien cuidada durante mis múltiples viajes a conferencias y trabajo de campo.

I’d like to thank my professors, extended family, and close friends for your generous support throughout this journey, and for your patience during my long absences.

Finally, I will be forever grateful to the families who participated in this study. Your courage, determination, and hope were an inspiration to me. To my dear friend, Y.A.L., thank you for your valuable contributions to this dissertation. Estarán siempre en mi corazón.
Dedicated to Joaquin, my life partner and greatest supporter,

and to my children, Rebeca, Joaquinito, and Laling.

*Dedicado también a mis abuelos, Lupita y José, mis primeros maestros.*

Joaquin, thank you for encouraging me to dream big, to do what I love,

and for propelling me to soar higher.

Rebeca, you model strength and assertiveness for me, I love your courageous spirit.

Joaquinito, you show me the meaning of kindness, I love your intellectual mind.

Laling, you are my model for emotional intelligence, I love your sweet heart.

*Gracias por su amor incondicional. Son mi todo. Los amo.*
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Migration across borders does not happen in a vacuum, it responds to larger world structures that often go unnoticed. Not examining migration within a global, socio-economic, and political context would result in placing the blame on the person, and not on the global neoliberal structures that prompted the migration. Neoliberalism is the practice of prioritizing a global free-market capitalism, or, to put it simply, is the practice of favoring profits over people. In the case of the U.S. and Mexico, neoliberal practices such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) resulted in an unprecedented movement of people from Mexico to the U.S. in the 1990s, as Mexicans were forced to migrate north, sometimes without proper documentation (Fernández-Kelly & Massey, 2007) because NAFTA lowered their salaries and standard of living in Mexico (Hing, 2010). This increment can be seen in Figure 1.

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<th>Figure 1. Undocumented Immigrant Population in the U.S. in Millions.</th>
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The militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border after 9/11 pushed undocumented migrants to opt for longer stays, prompting them to establish residency and to have children in the U.S.
Changes in the political and economic climate of the U.S. resulted in a reduction of undocumented Mexican immigrants from an estimated 6.9 million in 2007 to 5.6 million in 2014 (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). These changes include the implementation of restrictive immigration laws such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Individual Responsibility Act in 1996 (Jacobo Suárez, 2014); the U.S. financial crisis of 2008 (Wheatley 2011); and more recently, deportations under president Obama that were exacerbated by the anti-immigrant stance of the Trump administration targeting Mexicans.

After a deportation, many families move to border cities in northern Mexico hoping to return to the U.S. (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012). This relocation has detrimental consequences for children who, despite being U.S. citizens, are forced to leave with their parents. The disruption in their lifestyle affects their education, as not only the standards of living are often lower in Mexico, but children also experience an unfamiliar language, a foreign culture, and educational policies that are unable to support them (Sierra & López, 2013). For purposes of this study, children with school experience in U.S. and Mexico will be referred to as transnational students.

**Problem Statement**

One of the greatest impacts of globalization has been the creation of transnational lifestyles with deep impacts on culture and identity, since migration always involves separation and uprooting (Falicov, 2016). Such is the case of U.S.-born children who are forced to leave with their parents after a deportation. According to Gonzalez-Barrera (2015), 1 million Mexican families along with their U.S-born children have returned to Mexico between 2009 and 2014, with 14% of them citing deportation as their reason for returning. In 2010, there were over 569,000 U.S.-born minors in Mexican schools (Jacobo Suárez, 2014; Kline, 2013). Noticing this trend, Mexican researchers have focused on the cultural, institutional, and pedagogical barriers
transnational students face (Camacho Rojas, 2014). A review of the literature –discussed at length in Chapter 2– shows that U.S.-born students attending schools in Mexico face multiple obstacles, including negotiating two school systems, two cultures, and two worlds (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008), lack of required documentation to enroll in school (Sierra & Lopez, 2013), limited Spanish proficiency (Tacelosky, 2013), identity misrepresentations (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2006), and a great sense of loss (Zúñiga & Vivas, 2014). Most of the scholarship fails isolate the effects of deportation on transnational students; in addition, scholars take a deficit-based approach that leaves the nationalistic and mono-linguistic nature of Mexican education unchallenged, and that ignores transnational funds of knowledge. Therefore, this qualitative study investigated the experiences of transnational students attending schools in a northern border city of Mexico due to parental deportation, in order to determine their needs, but most importantly, their modes of resistance and human agency.

**Purpose of the Study**

Typically, researchers that study the education of transnational students in Mexico do not make a distinction between voluntary returns and deportations in their sampling (Borjian, Muñoz, van Dijk, & Houde, 2016; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015), nor do they incorporate gendered issues in their research (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b). Additionally, schools fail to acknowledge the transnational funds of knowledge students possess (Sánchez García & Hamann, 2016; Smith, 2006). To address these issues, the purpose of this qualitative study is: first, to document the educational experiences of transnational students attending schools in a border city in northern Mexico due to the deportation of their parents, in order to understand the obstacles they face and the support they need; second, to investigate the difference in their experiences due to gender;
third, to recognize their level of critical awareness; and fourth, to understand their resistance modes and coping mechanisms.

**Research Questions**

Guided by the theoretical framework, and by the gaps identified in the literature review discussed in Chapter 2, I formulated the following four research questions:

1. How are the educational experiences of transnational youth enrolled in schools in northern Mexico shaped by parental deportation?

2. In what ways do the educational experiences of transnational students differ due to gender?

3. How, if at all, does the use of dialogic processes raise the critical consciousness of transnational students regarding their educational experiences?

4. How, if at all, do transnational youth enact transformational or other types of resistance to obstacles in their educational experiences, and more broadly?

**Theoretical Framework**

I used *transnational feminism, dialogic feminism,* and *Coyolxauhqui imperative* to guide my research methods and to examine the educational experiences of transnational students. The use of three theoretical frameworks might seem excessive, however, the study of transnationalism— that encompasses deported parents and transnational students— is complex, multifaceted, and multi-tiered. As Zúñiga and Hamann (2015) point out, at the macro level transnational children are caught in a global era of migratory movements; at the meso level, this migration impacts their relationship with schools and communities; finally, at the micro level, migration leaves an emotional scar in them. Therefore, this framework is suitable for my study since, from a feminist lens that addresses power differentials and marginalization from a
gendered perspective, I address global and neoliberal issues through *transnational feminism*, I situate the experiences of transnational children and their families within school and community contexts using *dialogic feminism*; and I honor the emotional struggles of participants, but I also highlight their agency through the *Coyolxauhqui imperative*. A conceptualization of the theoretical framework can be seen in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Conceptualization of Theoretical Framework.*

*Transnational feminism* (Fernandes, 2013) takes a class and gender approach to study “border-crossing cultural, political, and socioeconomic phenomena” (p. 108). Transnational
feminism is adequate for this study because it incorporates an intersectional perspective that critiques capitalist, imperialist, neoliberal, and patriarchal systems from a global standpoint. Reverse migration and transnationalism – represented by parental deportation and transnational students, are forms of border-crossing, therefore, transnational feminism allowed me to explain them from an economic and socio-political global context. In my analysis of data and presentation of the findings, I made the effort to make visible the often ignored neoliberal practices that magnify the exclusion of transnational students and their families.

Dialogic feminism is based on the assumption that, through dialogue, subjects are able to gain a deeper understanding of their reality and have the agency to transform it (Castillo Herrera & Vílchez, 2014). More specifically, dialogic feminism “aims to unite the efforts of all women (of different educational levels, ethnicities, and social classes) to overcome the inequalities we face” (Puigvert, 2003, p. 51). This dialogic and inclusive feature strongly guided my research methods, as it provided a framework to analyze how my participants contested hegemonic narratives and offered their own visions, life histories, and worldviews.

Because deportation involves separation and uprooting, I was also interested in the effects at the personal level. The uprooting of U.S.-born children of deportees causes a social trauma that creates a wound in need of healing. For the effects at the personal level, I used Anzaldúa’s (2015) Coyolxauhqui imperative, described as an ongoing process to heal and achieve integration, “to move through and beyond trauma and rage, transforming it into social justice work” (p. xxiii). In Aztec mythology, Coyolxauhqui refers to a goddess whose body was dismembered and tossed into the sky, to eventually become the moon (see Figure 3). Anzaldúa was inspired by this story to represent cultural trauma and other types of oppression. To Anzaldúa, Coyolxauhqui’s broken body represented the necessary fragmentation that needs to
occur in order for a critical consciousness to emerge. But most importantly, Coyolxauhqui also represented a symbol of “reconstruction and reframing, one that allows for putting the pieces together in a new way” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 20). The Coyolxauhqui imperative framework, symbolizing the ongoing process of fragmentation and reconstruction, allowed me to identify critical awareness, modes of resistance, and healing processes in my participants.

![Figure 3. Coyolxauhqui Aztec Goddess.](image)

When considering the educational experiences of transnational students in northern Mexico, transnational feminism situated these experiences within the larger context of deportation, highlighting the structural inequalities students experienced in the U.S. and Mexico. Similarly, dialogic feminism debunked an oppressive discourse that brands deported parents and
their children as deficient, allowing them to tell their own stories, and to contest master narratives. Finally, the Coyolxauhqui imperative elucidated how transnational students made sense of the social trauma they experienced when they were uprooted from their birthplace, and how they reconstructed and healed themselves. The contribution of this theoretical framework to the field of education is a more complex understanding of the experiences of transnational students in Mexican schools, to in turn, inform educational policy and teacher professional development on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Topic Rationale**

“Dejó su gente, su pueblo, estudió, se volvió extranjer.”

[“She left her people, her town, she studied, she became a foreigner.”]


**My Personal Story of Migration**

When I ask people their reasons for selecting their research interests, their responses invariably include having a personal relationship with the topic, and wanting to understand it better in order to understand themselves better. This is particularly true for scholars who deal with issues of oppression and marginalization in a multicultural context. My case is no different.

My decision to study migration was a conscious choice. I am a Mexican immigrant who moved to the U.S. as a young adult in search of professional opportunities denied to me for being a woman in a patriarchal Mexican society. But before becoming a migrant student, I was a child who was left behind in Mexico by a migrant mother who decided to move to the U.S. to escape the social stigma of being a single mother after a separation. Being the child of an immigrant afforded me positive and negative consequences while living in Mexico: on the one hand, as described by Dreby (2007), belonging to a family that had a culture of migration granted me a
certain degree of social capital, as my mother was able to send money for my living expenses, including a private education. On the other hand, I paid the emotional price that results from separating from a parent at a young age. I did not know it at the time because I lacked the critical consciousness needed to recognize the structural elements forcing my mother and I to leave our home country, now that I have the knowledge and the language I can name those factors: classism, sexism, and gendered oppression. This intersectional combination compounded our oppression, forcing us to migrate in order to overcome subjection.

My personal experiences in Mexican K-12 schools and U.S. higher education served me as research tools to value, respect, and empathize with my participants, as well as to make deeper interpretations of meaning in our conversations. As a researcher, this sensibility is important because just like transnational students, I have experienced transnational migration firsthand. I know what it’s like to be uprooted from what has been home since birth; I know what it’s like to lack the language to defend myself against racial comments; I know what it’s like to have my frames of reference wiped out because in my new context, what I was taught to believe was no longer valid; I know the challenges of navigating two school systems, two worlds, and two cultures. I also know what it’s like to be resilient and hopeful, and to arduously work for a better future in a new environment. Anzaldúa (2015) describes this alteration of identity that results from migration, stating that it not only creates a clash between the often contradicting former and current cultures, but forces a shift in ideologies “questioning both the native culture’s and the new culture’s descriptions of reality” (p.71).

A Feminist and Social Justice Approach

As Davis and Craven (2016) explain, “the feminist project has come to mean more than solely focusing on women’s experiences –it also encompasses prioritizing projects that impact
those who are marginalized” (p. 8). From a feminist perspective, this project looked closely at ways in which gender intersects with constructs of race, class, human rights and experience to support transnational students whose lives have been affected by parental deportation.

Additionally, this research intends to engage in knowledge production that contests power asymmetries by prioritizing the experiences of transnational students, to identify the causes of their oppression, and the ways in which they resist it (Davis & Craven, 2016). The end goal of this project is to produce knowledge, along with transnational students, that contributes to the betterment of their adverse situations. My choice to work with minoritized groups developed from what Chela Sandoval (2000) calls *oppositional consciousness*, described as “a set of critical points within which individuals and groups seeking to transform dominant oppressive powers can constitute themselves as resistant and oppositional citizen-subjects” (p. 53). Hence, I envision engaging in oppositional consciousness alongside my participants during this research.

This project takes a social justice approach because U.S.-born children of undocumented parents who experience structural violence and social trauma in the U.S., continue to experience oppression in Mexico after the deportation of their parents. In both countries, children often experience structural violence in the form of economic and social instability caused by the parents’ unstable employment, lack of access to public social services, and lack of financial autonomy (Dreby, 2012b). In the U.S., they experience social trauma caused by a permanent fear of deportation (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Capps et al., 2015); in Mexico, their social trauma stems from the stigma of deportation (Jacobo Suárez, 2014) and exclusion (Sierra & López, 2013). In the particular case of transnational students in northern Mexico, Millán (2012) found that they often speak about family separation, they grieve the inability to live in the U.S. despite having the legal right to do so, they report being anxious in an unfamiliar environment where they do
not speak Spanish or know the local school culture, and they are uncertain of the future that awaits them in a school system that is not prepared to support their special needs. Many students also experience a culture shock created by the lower living standards in their new environment. This shows that transnational students, as well as their deported parents, are subjected to cultural and institutional oppressive systems in Mexico.

**Research Method Rationale**

The use of a feminist approach, along with a feminist framework, calls for a methodology that supports and advances the work of social justice. With this goal in mind, I purposefully sought a qualitative methodology with advocacy and participatory elements. After a meticulous exploration of methodologies, including feminist, emancipatory, decolonizing, and indigenous approaches, I chose Gómez, Latorre, Sánchez, and Flecha’s (2006) *Critical Communicative Methodology* (CCM). The CCM is a dialogic, non-hierarchical, and participative research process that aims to critically analyze reality in order to transform unjust social conditions. An exhaustive description of the critical communicative methodology is offered in Chapter 3. Although the CCM is not a feminist methodology per se, it incorporates feminist components, including a heavy reliance on dialogue and a firm intention to minimize unequal power dynamics between researcher and co-researchers by placing equal value on the academic knowledge of the researcher, and the experiential knowledge of the participant.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is of great significance to the field of education due to the focus on parental deportation and its impact on the educational experiences of U.S.-born transnational students in Mexican schools. A review of literature, discussed at length in Chapter 2, revealed a lack of research that focused specifically on the effects of deportation on transnational students in
Mexico (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015). Additionally, research reviewed focused on children who are left behind in the U.S. by their deported parents (Capps et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012a; 2012b), however, these articles did not include children who are already established in Mexico. Regarding transnational students, my study became particularly relevant after the 2016 election of a U.S. president who has been extremely vocal about the criminalization of the Mexican undocumented population in the U.S., as an increased number of transnational students are expected to arrive in Mexico with their deported parents (Y.A. López, personal communication, April 21, 2017). From a social justice perspective, this study shed light on the neoliberal and socio-political structures responsible for the exclusion and denial of basic services to transnational students that remain invisible, so that the Mexican educational system understands these issues in order to ease the transition and incorporation of transnational students into society. This study can also be argued from an economic perspective, since these children are U.S. citizens with the lawful right to return to their birthplace as adults, and when they do, they will join the workforce. Consequently, their academic trajectories should be of great concern to the U.S. government. Finally, neither Mexico nor the U.S. has educational policies in place to support transnational students (Zúñiga, Hamann, & Sánchez García, 2008). Therefore, my findings can inform educational policy, teacher preparation programs, and government organizations tasked with providing assistance to transnational families.

**Assumptions**

This study assumed that transnational students would possess some kind of critical awareness regarding the role deportation has played in their transnational experiences, and that they would display at least some degree of resistance that would lead toward a more developed
sense of transformational resistance (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) as their level of critical consciousness increased.

**Limitations**

Time, geographical location, and doing research internationally were my main limitations. One semester of planning and one semester of data collection were insufficient for this ambitious project, as longer time in the field would have yielded richer data and more nuanced findings. Geographical location drastically limited my ability to collect data, since I reside in a city other than where the research took place, and I had to allocate extra time and financial resources for traveling. Lastly, conducting research in Mexico posed added challenges, including the fact that Mexican institutions are slower to respond to requests, and Mexican culture has a more relaxed sense of punctuality, thus aggravating the time constraints. Additionally, there were unforeseen factors, such as the lengthy and multiple IRB approvals for my research protocol modifications.

**Scope and Delimitations**

This study was initially designed to concentrate on teenage U.S.-born children of deported parents, as this age group was identified in the literature as being the most vulnerable. However, after the first round of data collection it became clear that there were U.S. as well as Mexico-born children within a family, that younger siblings were equally vulnerable, and that their family context impacted their experiences. Therefore, the scope of this study was extended to include the experiences of U.S. and Mexico-born children ages 9-17 who attend school in a northern Mexican border city, as well as their family context. This study does not include participants who returned to Mexico voluntarily, or students in higher education.
Definition of Key Terms

**Border pedagogy:** Is defined as “a set of multifaceted, complex, and interactive factors; educational policies; curriculum; instructional practices; and a knowledge base that educators need to consider to increase the academic achievement of diverse students in the border region” (Cline, Reyes, & Necochea, 2005, p. 149).

**Reverse Migration/Return Migration:** Is part of the transnational migration study, and refers to the voluntarily or involuntarily return of international migrants from a host country to their places of origin (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012).

**Social Trauma:** Is described as a set of unjust events that leave a mark on society and that have traumatic consequences on the individual (Iglesias Saldaña, 2009). A social trauma causes a fracture in the collective fabric of society, causing not only a change in the victims’ identity and how they relate to others, but in the way they view the world (Ortega, 2011).

**Social Healing:** Social healing seeks to address social wounds created by conflict, collective trauma, and large-scale oppression by examining their root causes and promoting forgiveness, reconciliation, and restorative justice (Thompson & O’Dea, 2011). In my work, I adopted the *Coyolxauhqui imperative*, a social healing for social justice framework developed by Anzaldúa (2015) that identifies healing as “moving beyond trauma and rage and into social justice work” (p. xxiii).

**Structural violence:** Peace and conflict studies scholar Johan Galtung (1990) defines structural violence as the privileged access to goods, resources, and opportunities that dominant groups hold over subordinate groups. This unequal advantage is supported by the social, political, and economic systems that govern societies, states, and the world. An example of structural violence would be institutional discrimination.
**Transnationalism:** Transnationalism “aim[s] to capture the complex economic, social, cultural, and political processes that emerged in the world as a result of globalization” (Brittain, 2002, p. 11). It “embodies various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love (Sanchez, 2007, p. 493).

**Transnational Feminism:** Studies border-crossing phenomena that include cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors, while making a critique of class and gender in a global economy (Fernandes, 2013).

**Transnational students:** For purposes of this project, this refers to migrant students with experience in Mexican and U.S. educational systems (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2006).

**Transnational Cultural Capital:** Refers to “the linguistic and cultural knowledge [migrants] acquired as a result of their transnational experience as the children of working-class immigrants to the U.S.” (Petrón, 2009, p. 117).

**Transnational Funds of Knowledge:** “Focus[es] on the forms of knowledge that youth bring with them as a result of lived experiences derived from transnational journeying, or membership in transnational communities” (Dabach & Fones, 2016, p. 11).

**Transnational literacies:** Brochin Ceballos (2012) defines it as “the ways in which movements across spaces shape people’s literate lives and identities” (p. 687) to help us understand how simplistic literacy curricula based on “one geographical place, one set of standards, the preservation of nation-state values, languages, and cultural practices are not sufficient to make sense of children’s lived experiences and participation within complex transnational ways of knowing” (p. 688).
Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 1 presented the background, problem, and purpose of my study, as well as a rationale for my choice of topic and theoretical framework. The significance of my research on the effects of deportation on transnational students in Mexico was also discussed. Chapter 2 will review the existent literature on Mexican and U.S. scholarship covering parental deportation and transnational students in order to situate my proposed study within a larger context, and to identify the gaps that justify the need for the proposed study. Chapter 3 delineates my methodological approach.
“May we do work that matters. Vale la pena, it’s worth the pain.”

(Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 22).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 1 presented the background, rationale, theoretical framework, and significance of my research on parental deportation and its effects on the education of U.S.-born children in northern Mexico. In Chapter 2, I present the existent literature on transnational students from Mexican and the U.S researchers, focusing on two major topics: parental deportation and transnational students in Mexico. I divide these topics into themes to highlight the focus of Mexican and U.S. researchers. Finally, I discuss and critique the literature, identifying the gaps that provide a justification for my study. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 1, neoliberal forces that caused Mexicans to migrate north, sometimes without proper documentation, were magnified by a globalization that allows the free flow of goods and capital across borders, but denies the same rights to people (Sierra & López, 2013). With millions of Mexicans forced out of the U.S., the study on the impact of deportation on U.S.-born children became imperative.

This literature review aimed to explore what is known about the effects of parental deportation on the education of children who were forced to migrate to Mexico with their parents. In addition, because scholars only became interested in the flow of students from U.S. into Mexico in the early 2000s, I explored the literature produced by Mexican and U.S scholars to find out what, and how much, we knew about these students. In doing so, this became one of the most comprehensive literature reviews covering U.S. and Mexican research interests on the topic of transnational students that includes articles in English and Spanish.
This literature review is divided in two major topics: parental deportation, and the study of transnational students in Mexico. I identified major themes as seen in Figure 4, indicating whether the research was led by Mexican or U.S. scholars based on the institution of the lead author.

For this review of the literature I used UNLV University Libraries (online access), Google Scholar, and Google. After an exhaustive search for all the available literature in English and in Spanish for the last 15 years, my initial search yielded tens of thousands of entries.
Therefore, I concentrated on articles that contained key words such as transnational, Mexico or Mexican, deportation, parental deportation, students, youth, and children in order to narrow my pool, presented in Table 1, according to number of articles.

Table 1. Literature Review Preliminary Search (Before Inclusion Selection).

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<th>Prompt</th>
<th>UNLV Libraries</th>
<th>Google Scholar</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transnational Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Transnational Students in Mexican Schools”</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Estudiantes Transnacionales en México”</td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of articles</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Deportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The effects of deportation on children”</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Efectos de la deportación en niños”</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of articles</td>
<td>39</td>
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All articles that did not concentrate exclusively on Mexico, that did not study transnational students, and did not deal with deportation or migration, were eliminated. I then proceeded to translate articles that were written in Spanish, and annotated them in English. After these selection criteria, I reviewed 27 articles on transnational students (21 in English, 6 in Spanish) and 7 articles on parental deportation (4 in English, 3 in Spanish) published in journals that included the Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, and Estudios Fronterizos [Border...
A total of 34 articles (30 empirical, 2 conceptual, 1 literature review, and 1 doctoral dissertation) were examined.

**Review of the Literature**

In terms of migration, Mexico has been traditionally considered a sending country, while the U.S. has been considered a receiving country. Hence, it is no surprise that most of the research on transnational students has focused on Mexico-born transnational students and their performance in U.S. schools (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012; Kasun, 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b). However, the onset of return migration and mass deportations of Mexican nationals –reaching their peak in 2008– has turned Mexico into a receiving country, with as many as half a million U.S.-born youth under the age of 18 living in Mexican territory as of 2010 (Kline, 2013), making the study of transnational youth in Mexico imperative. For this literature review, I explored the literature on parental deportation and transnational students in Mexico, discussed next.

**Literature on Parental Deportation**

**Theme 1: The Adverse Impact of Parental Deportation on Children and Families**

One of the most cited scholars on the effects of parental deportation is Joanna Dreby. In her ethnographic study of 91 families from New Jersey and Ohio, she created a deportation pyramid to evaluate the burden of deportation of 110 children (Dreby, 2012a, 2012b). She discovered that parental deportation had long term effects, including family dissolution and uprooting from the children’s place of origin, as well as short-term effects including financial instability, emotional distress, and disruption of daily activities. Children in her studies conflated police with immigration officials, and immigrant status with illegality. As a consequence, these children had a negative view of immigration regardless of legal status. Chaudry et al. (2011) had almost identical findings in their qualitative study of 20 families facing deportation, eight of
which were ultimately forced to relocate with their families to their places of origin. Children in this study experienced family separation, financial hardship, and behavioral changes that posed serious risks to their emotional well-being. Similarly, Capps et al. (2015) reported that researchers have associated the fear of deportation to poor physical and emotional health in parents and children. Finally, Braberack and Xu (2010) conducted a quantitative regression analysis of 132 participants, focusing on parents’ perceptions of the impact of deportation on their children. Not surprisingly, authors concluded that parents’ legal vulnerability to deportation is inversely proportional to the well-being of their children, that is, the higher the legal vulnerability of the parent the lower the overall stability of the child. Because this quantitative study was based on perceptions, the results must be taken with caution. Braberack and Xu (2010) would have been able to offer a more holistic picture had they used a mixed methods approach as opposed to a regression analysis.

**Theme 2: Family Separation**

A recurring theme in the Mexican scholarship on parental deportation was family separation. Remarkably, this was one of the few topics that were studied from a gendered perspective. Lopez (2015) conducted qualitative interviews with 3 Mexican male deportees shortly after their removal from the U.S., who reported not only the financial hardship, but also, the emotional devastation a forced separation posed for them, their wives, and children who were left behind.

From a gendered approach, Rocha & Ocegueda (2013) performed a case study with 10 Mexican female deportees in Tijuana to determine the strategies used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to determine deportation, concluding that selection was done randomly. These mothers had no criminal record, although some had deportation orders, they
just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Among the impact of family separation reported by mothers was losing track of their children under government care, having to move their children to Mexico, and the possibility of their children being school drop-outs in the U.S.

Similarly, Maria Marroni (2006) based her study on the analysis of the experiences of one indigenous migrant woman through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and testimonio methods. Although her participant was not a deportee at the time of the study, the author used her case to discuss negative consequences of parental deportation, including a violent separation of mother and children with negative emotional repercussions for both, and the different behaviors men and women deportees display, with women following men after a deportation to avoid a family separation, and men not reciprocating when the deported parent happens to be the mother.

**Literature on Transnational Students in Mexico**

**Theme 1: Experiences of Transnational Students in Mexican schools**

Without a doubt, the most prolific authors and pioneers on the study of transnational students in Mexico with experience in U.S. schools are Víctor Zúñiga, Edmund Hamann, and Juan Sánchez García. In fact, it was Zúñiga and Hamann (2006) who started a record of transnational students attending schools in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico, in the 2004-2005 school year, even before their own teachers were aware of their presence in their classrooms. Their mixed methods study began with 14,473 students in 174 schools in grades the 1st-9th studying in schools in Nuevo León, and has turned into a longitudinal study that has followed transnational students in Mexico for over a decade.

In 2006, Hamann, Zúñiga and Sánchez García introduced the first literature review available on transnational students, and uncovered how these students have to negotiate two
school systems with limited proficiency on both, including limited Spanish language skills and little to no knowledge of school cultures in Mexico. Furthermore, they found that Mexican schools are under resourced, and that teachers lack the cultural competency needed to support transnational students, which poses negative implications for instruction. Interestingly, this first literature review on transnational students was the first to convey their agency, introducing the term *transnationalism from below*, which refers to “the active decision-making by members of economically vulnerable households to reduce their vulnerability by enacting strategies that take advantage of legal, economic, and cultural resources in more than one nation state” (Hamann, Zúñiga & Sánchez García, 2006, p. 259). Additionally, in their review, these authors accurately acknowledged that transnational students display competencies that non-transnational students lack, including bilingualism, biculturalism, intercultural competencies, and adaptation to two contexts. This asset-based view is known as *transnational funds of knowledge*, which refers to “forms of knowledge that youth bring with them as a result of lived experiences derived from transnational journeying or membership in transnational communities” (Dabach & Fones, 2016, p. 11).

Leading the scholarship of the study of transnational youth in Mexican schools for over a decade, Mexican scholars Zúñiga and Sánchez García, as well as U.S. scholar Hamann, have expanded their research from the state of Nuevo León, to the states of Zacatecas, Jalisco, and Puebla. Despite including three more states in their research, their findings remain fairly consistent, suggesting several generalizations statewide:

a) Mexican schools are designed with a highly mono-nationalistic vision, rendering them ill-prepared to meet the needs of an increasing transnational student population (Zúñiga, Hamann, & Sánchez García, 2008).
b) Once aware of the presence of transnational students in their classrooms, many teachers indicated the need to know more about them; however, teachers also held deficit-based views and denied the need to modify teaching practices to support migrant students regardless of the disproportionate incidence of grade repetition and drop-out rates among this group of students (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a).

c) Mexican teachers rejected the idea of equity, insisting that transnational students should be treated “like everybody else” (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b, p. 61).

d) Because there is no formal follow up record of transnational students in Mexico, these students are invisible in the Mexican school system (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008).

e) Mexican peers and teachers view transnational students with a sense of inauthenticity and otherness, creating a sense of exclusion in the classroom (Hamann, Zúñiga & Sánchez García, 2006; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008; 2009).

f) Transnational students report having a negative experience in Mexican schools, while they view their school experience in U.S. as positive (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2008; Sánchez García, Hamann & Zúñiga, 2012).

g) Despite being more likely to struggle academically, U.S.-born transnational students displayed higher aspirations to attend college, as well as a higher self-confidence regarding their school performance compared to Mexico-born transnational students and their Mexican peers with Mexico-only educational experience (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2010).

h) Over three quarters of transnational students surveyed reported a dual Mexican-American identity, and a strong desire to return to the U.S. in the future (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008; 2009; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b).
i) U.S. schools are more sensible to the linguistic needs of transnational students, displaying more tolerance to the use of Spanish in school than Mexican schools show for the use English in the classroom (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008).

j) Lastly, transnational students reported experiencing pain caused by moving from one school system to another, feeling they lost their capacity to be successful in school (Zúñiga & Vivas Romero, 2014).

Other authors have extended their research to other states, including Guerrero and Oaxaca, obtaining similar findings. Ocampo (2014) focused on the relationship between educational problems and transnational family status in the state of Guerrero. He found that the transnational status of families had adverse consequences for the educational attainment of transnational students. This mixed methods study used quantitative methods that included quantification of schools with transnational student enrollment, and qualitative methods that included semi structured interviews. The study found that, among the major educational issues are social integration, linguistic dissonance, learning issues, school apathy, and family instability. In addition, in the case of deportation, PROBEM was unable to support them as efficiently as parents who plan their return to Mexico. The author concluded that binational students have reshaped the status of education in Mexican schools, forcing them to consider transnationalism.

Another topic of interest among Mexican scholars was the incorporation of transnational students into the Mexican educational system, a term Mexican scholars call school reinsertion. Vargas Valle and Camacho Rojas (2015) used information from the 2010 Census to study the absenteeism patterns and grade repetition among transnational students in Mexico, concluding that they are at a higher risk, especially in urban areas in Mexico.
In a 2016 study, Glick and Yabiku looked at how migration and duration of residence affected the schooling of transnational students. Analyzing data from the 2010 Mexican census, and the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, authors used a logic regression model that found that U.S.-born children lagged behind on school enrollment. This gap increased with age, meaning that the number of older students not enrolled in schools in Mexico was larger than the number of younger students. A factor for this gap also had to do with the number of years they’ve been living in Mexico, with students with more than 5 years showing the greatest enrollment, and students with less than 5 years showing the least enrollment. Authors justified their results on years of residence stating that, recently, more undocumented parents with less resources have been returning to Mexico, as opposed to more affluent, better prepared parents returning over the last decade due to an economic downturn in the U.S.

Finally, in their latest study, Zúñiga & Hamann (2015) made a conscious decision to include children’s perspectives in order to explain how they made sense of their migration experience from the U.S. to Mexico. Their study used a more qualitative approach, compiling surveys and interviews they have been conducting since 2005 with 330,000 U.S.-born migrant children ages 9 to 16. Interestingly, they found that children viewed family-related issues such as caring for grandparents, family reunification, and divorce to be the principal cause for their return to Mexico. Surprisingly, job or economic factors were not viewed as relevant for these children, and only a few referred to legal issues such as parental deportation as the reason for their move to Mexico, suggesting these young participants do not have a firm grasp on sociopolitical and economic factors.

On the other hand, Borjian, Muñoz de Cote, van Dijk & Houde (2016) found contrasting results through phenomenological interviews, field notes, and observations with 12 transnational
students in the states of Guanajuato and Colima. The study was interested in researching parents’ reason for returning to Mexico, whether voluntary or by deportation, as well as their children’s experiences in Mexico and future plans. Authors also wanted to extend the notions of a culturally relevant pedagogy and resiliency as possible ways to support and empower transnational students, promote social justice, and develop educational resiliency. In this case, the main reasons for returning to Mexico included financial hardship, family obligations, deportation, and divorce. Unsurprisingly, the majority of children expressed their desire to return to the U.S. as adults. In an interesting note, all participants were willing to share their experiences in both U.S. and Mexico, but they were not enthusiastic about discussing identity development and acculturation processes.

The reason for the contrasting findings in the last two studies is hard to explain, however, the choice of methodologies might provide clarification. Zúñiga & Hamann (2015) chose a rather restrictive mixed methods approach, using forced survey responses without discussing the possible effect on the authenticity of answers from their children participants. Borjian et al. (2016) on the other hand, used a phenomenological approach that allowed for ample description of participants’ experiences.

**Theme 2: Government Support for Transnational Students in Mexico**

Trying to respond to the needs of migrant families engaged in circular migration between the U.S. and Mexico, in 1995 the government of Mexico, in collaboration with the United States, created the Programa Binacional de Educación Migrante (PROBEM), or Binational Program for Migrant Education; and in 2008, a teacher preparation component was included (Sierra Pérez & López, 2013). In their study, Sierra Pérez and López (2013) discussed the reality of youth migrants in the US-Mexico border area of Tijuana and San Diego, which has seen an increase of
transnational students since 2005. As a result, a PROBEM office was established in Tijuana to provide guidance and support to migrant families trying to enroll their children in school. According to these authors, there were 1,869 transnational students registered in Tijuana in 2012. This number only reflected migrant students who sought PROBEM’s support. Remarkably, this article portrayed the PROBEM program in a positive light without offering any critiques.

However, other research has offered a less flattering depiction of the program. For example, Sierra Pérez and López (2013) failed to mention that the program is underutilized because transnational families are not aware of its existence (Smith, 2006) and because the program is severely underfunded (Ocampo, 2014). In addition, contrary to the reported efforts for a transnational teacher professional development, schools do not necessarily implement recommendations, and teachers show reluctance to differentiate instruction for transnational students, often referring to them in a prejudiced fashion (Franco García, 2014; Ocampo, 2014).

In contrast, Ocampo (2014) recognized that PROBEM did not provide the necessary support to transnational students that came to Guerrero as a result of a deportation, mainly because PROBEM was designed to support transnational families whose returns were previously planned, because they returned to Mexico voluntarily. Ocampo’s study uncovered the issues transnational students face while trying to gain access to Mexican schools due to lack of required documentation, including birth certificates and U.S. school records.

Similarly, Franco García (2014) discussed another initiative to support transnational students created in 2008 called Programa de Educación Básica Sin Fronteras (PEBSF), or the Program of Basic Education Without Borders, acknowledging that, in theory, the PROBEM as well as the PEBSF initiatives took into consideration the needs of transnational students and the
support mechanisms needed for their success, unfortunately, this did not translate into schools adopting the proposed measures in real life.

Finally, using information from the 2010 Mexican census to identify areas with the highest number of returnees from the U.S., Vargas Valle and Camacho Rojas, (2015) measured the cultural, social, and economic capital of transnational children ages 11-15 to predict school absenteeism and grade repetition among this group. They found that transnational students in Mexico are at a high risk of absenteeism and grade repetition, particularly if they attend urban schools. They concluded that, although cultural, social, and economic capital influenced this outcome, so did the lack of government and institutional support. Authors recommended future research that studies the adaptation mechanisms of transnational students in order to prevent absenteeism and grade repetition.

**Theme 3: Linguistic Needs of Transnational Students**

The literature on transnational students establishes that the Mexican school system does not have mechanisms in place to support their linguistic needs. In her qualitative ethnography with eight elementary students in Puebla, Tacelosky (2013) established a community-based partnership between her university and the community to support transnational students in their efforts to reinforce their Spanish language. She found overcrowded classrooms with teachers who refused to acknowledge that transnational students needed special support, insisting they were just fine. Furthermore, English classes became uncomfortable for transnational students because teachers made them feel that their colloquial English was deficient, and in many cases, teachers confused students when correcting them on statements that were perfectly acceptable. Transnational students, on the other hand, reported their desire to retain English, but expressed having little opportunities to speak it in Mexico. Additionally, since their Spanish was acquired
in the home context, they could communicate orally, but they needed help with their written and pronunciation skills in Spanish. Finally, university students acting as tutors for transnational students were enthusiastic about community based learning, however, they expressed frustration with the disinterest some students showed in improving their Spanish. The tutors’ journals analyzed in this study were eye opening, as they revealed that some transnational students openly reject learning Spanish and show no interest in learning the Mexican culture. This is comparable with the assimilationist approach used by teachers of Mexican immigrants in U.S. schools, mainly because tutors in Puebla wrongly assumed that all transnational students were eager to learn Spanish in order to do well in school and to assimilate into Mexican society, without taking into consideration the wealth of transnational funds of knowledge these students can contribute to the Mexican educational system.

In his conceptual article, Patrick Smith (2006) argued for the need of the U.S. and Mexico to become familiar with the educational practices of each other, due to the increased mobility among them. In particular, he argued that the linguistic needs of transnational students are not considered. He analyzed the role of PROBEM in expediting the Documento de Transferencia or Transfer Document, required by all schools in Mexico in order to enroll transnational students. Smith concluded that, contrary to PROBEM’s claims, the linguistic needs of transnational students are ignored. For example, the transfer document lists a final grade in the English and Spanish subjects; however, a grade itself does not reflect the level of proficiency in either language, as other factors may influence grades (i.e. extra credit or missing assignments). Therefore, a main flaw of the transfer document is the fact that language proficiency may not be accurately reflected by the grade obtained, yet, this is not discussed. Finally, Smith (2006) suggests the adoption of “Funds of Linguistic Knowledge” (p. 435) as an avenue for the retention
of bilingualism among transnational students by focusing on the linguistic wealth of knowledge that is present in transnational communities.

**Theme 4: Border Pedagogy and Border Literacies**

Because the effects of globalization are more prominent in the border regions (Garza, 2007), scholars recognize that a pedagogy that takes into consideration educational policies, practices, and teacher professional development that improves the learning of students in border regions is of great importance. For this reason, Cline and Necochea (2006) sought to identify the teachers’ dispositions, attitudes, and motivation necessary for the success of transnational students in the borderlands. Through a qualitative study using interviews, observations, and artifact analysis with 20 educators from Tijuana (n=10) and San Diego (n=10), authors found that, to effectively educate students in border cities, teachers must have open-mindedness and flexibility, passion for borderland education, ongoing professional development, cultural sensitivity, and a pluralistic language orientation. Similarly, in a case study that used a critical pedagogy framework, Barrios’ (2011) dissertation explored how 12 teachers from Tijuana (n= 6) and San Diego (n= 6), applied border pedagogy in their teaching. Findings revealed that Border Pedagogy increased the cultural competency of these teachers on both sides of the border, who were better able to meet the needs of transnational Latinx immigrant students.

In another conceptual article examined, Garza (2007) used a *critical theory of education*—which posits that teachers need to understand and analyze the connections between the socio-political realities of the border region to their classroom practice—to describe the importance of Border Pedagogy in preparing multicultural educators that are equipped to teach culturally diverse students in the borderlands, specifically in the U.S.-Mexico border.
Similarly, the bi-national, bicultural, and bilingual interactions between teachers in the U.S-Mexico border were explored through a qualitative study (Reyes & Garza, 2005) involving teachers from San Diego and Tijuana. Participants found surprising similarities in concerns among them, regardless of what side of the border they inhabited. Additionally, Latinx educators became aware of the importance of bilingualism as necessary to teaching in the borderlands. For American teachers, interactions with Mexican educators forced them to re-examine their worldview, as deficit-based assumptions about Mexican education, Spanish language, and Mexican culture, were challenged to the core.

For some, bilingualism and biliteracy happened in a context outside of school, through their experiences as transnational immigrant children traveling yearly to Mexico to visit relatives. Brochin Ceballos (2012) conducted a qualitative study with 16 preservice teachers whose recurring theme was the role of the U.S.-Mexico border in the formation of their biliteracy and bilingual identities. Interestingly, these teachers challenged the deficit perspective of border crossing as being detrimental to their education, arguing that crossing the border as children served as the mechanism that allowed them to build their biliteracy and bilingualism. Dominant literacy and language policies dictate that their processes are linear, unrelated to race, monolithic, and static. However, transnationalism shows us that these processes are “non-linear, transnational, multilingual, multivocal, social, and fluid” (Brochin Ceballos, 2012, p. 701). As such, the incorporation of border pedagogies, transnational funds of knowledge, and transnational linguistic funds of knowledge in the study of transnational students are indispensable.
**Theme 5: Educators in a Transnational Context**

The increase of transnational students in Mexico has prompted researchers to investigate the repercussion of transnationalism for teacher education. More specifically, researchers have shifted their focus from transnational students exclusively, to include their teachers as well. In her phenomenological study, Mary Petrón (2009) extended Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept and introduced the term *transnational cultural capital* to denote “the linguistic and cultural knowledge participants acquired as a result of their transnational experience as the children of working-class immigrants to the U.S.” (p. 117). Her five participants were teachers of English in rural Mexico who passed on their transnational experiences by teaching “real” (colloquial) English to their students because they knew migrating to the U.S. might be a reality for their students in the future, while at the same time encouraging their U.S.-born transnational students to maintain their use of English. The English language proficiency these teachers acquired and maintained through transnationalism refers to the fact that none of the participants have a “prestige” version of English. Their counter narrative describes how, far from being considered deficient, their Chicano and Spanglish versions of English are considered an asset among their students.

Using data from a longitudinal study that has spanned eleven years, Sánchez García and Hamann (2014; 2016) focused on the perceptions of teachers about the phenomenon of transnationalism between the U.S. and Mexico. Their theoretical framework was based on the “forward thinking” concept, developed by Gándara and Callahan (2014) and which refers to schools taking proactive steps to accommodate, value, and affirm the linguistic, social, and cultural needs of migrant students. Analyzing the perception of Mexican teachers on student migration, their findings include, first, that transnational students’ invisibility, although less
prevalent than in 2004, is still present in schools. Second, that migration patterns among migrant students are becoming increasingly unpredictable. Finally, that Mexican teachers of transnational students displayed one of three approaches toward transnational students: a *change nothing approach*, considering it unfair to give differential instruction to transnational students and placing the blame for academic failure on the student, and not on teachers’ practices; a *building on what students know approach*, in which teachers acknowledged transnational funds of knowledge without challenging the status quo; and a *sympathy for the vulnerable approach*, a step toward advocacy for transnational students and their families, with the acknowledgment that teachers are ill-prepared to deal with the needs of transnational students, but with a clear disposition to become more adept at supporting them.

**Making Sense of the Literature: A Critique**

As evidenced in the above review of the literature, there are still many gaps to be filled. Regarding the impact of deportation on children, no study so far has concentrated on the effects of parental deportation on transnational students in Mexico specifically. The studies presented here mainly focused on the children of deported parents who are left behind in the U.S., however, none of the articles included children who are already established in Mexico. In addition, research on transnational students spearheaded by Zúñiga, Hamann, and Sánchez García includes over a dozen longitudinal studies spanning over eleven years, however, their methodology and findings remain relatively constant. The authors keep focusing their argument on the role of a Mexican educational system as a transmitter and reproducer of a monolingual, monocultural, and mononational identity that no longer represents the diversity transnational students bring to Mexican schools; while methodologically, they keep reverting to a mixed methods approach in most of their studies. Furthermore, although these authors advocate for
curricula and teacher education programs that include bilingual and bicultural approaches, they fail to offer concrete steps to do so. On the positive side, Zúñiga et al. seemed to go from informing about transnational students, to advocating for them. Finally, although it is slowly improving, this literature review made evident the lack of interest on the part of Mexican schools and government institutions to support transnational students in their academic success.

The research interests of Mexican and U.S. researchers presented in Figure 4 are also worth noting. For example, Mexican researchers are, for the most part, interested in studying the experiences of transnational students in Mexico and how the migrant status of their families negatively impacts their education. Remarkably, U.S. researchers are interested on the effects of parental deportation on children left behind in the U.S., while Mexican scholars are more interested on the negative impact of parental deportation on family separation, revealing the importance Mexicans place on close-knit family relationships. Regarding transnational students’ educational experiences, U.S. researchers’ interests lie more on specific aspects, such as their linguistic needs, the development of border pedagogies and literacy programs that better reflect their realities and support their learning, and the inclusion of bi-literacy and bicultural aspects in teacher education. In contrast, Mexican scholars are interested in exploring the general condition of transnational students in Mexican schools. This difference in research interests can stem from the fact that U.S. researchers have more experience with transnational students, and thus know what to look for in regard to future steps, whereas for Mexico, linguistic diversity and the acknowledgement of transnationalism in schools has just emerged as a social phenomenon and a topic of study within the last decade, explaining their interest in exploratory topics.
Justification and Significance of the Study: Finding the Gap

This review of the literature highlighted the significance of my study to address some of the gaps identified in the scholarship of transnational students in Mexico. Specifically, scholars have concentrated on return migration in general, but they have not concentrated explicitly on deportation (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015). Those that have studied deportation have focused on the burden of parental deportation on children who have been left behind in the U.S. (Capps et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012a; 2012b) but not on what happens with children that are forced to go with their parents to Mexico. Furthermore, the majority of the literature did not take an intersectional approach to account for gender, and those that did, only used gender to theorize on why girls tend to choose a Mexican identity whereas boys prefer a Mexican-American identity (Hamann, Zúñiga, 2011b). In addition, most findings revealed that transnational students are viewed from a deficit-perspective in Mexico (Pérez & López, 2013; Zúñiga, Hamann, Sánchez, 2008; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Finally, from the literature reviewed, only two articles (Borjian et al., 2016; Franco 2014) clearly conveyed their social justice stance. Trying to fill some of these gaps, my research questions focused on parental deportation to uncover the effects of deportation on transnational children’s education once they are established in Mexico. Second, this study used a feminist approach to understand the challenges transnational students faced, the support they received, and coping mechanisms they used to overcome obstacles from a gendered perspective. Finally, from a social justice stance, this study sought to move away from deficit-based perspectives and to highlight the human agency of transnational students by identifying their critical consciousness and resistance mechanisms. Although not the focus of this study, the lack of linguistic support identified in this literature review demonstrated a need for future studies in the language acquisition processes of transnational students. Therefore, in future studies, it
would be interesting to introduce and develop the term *Spanish Language Learners* (SLLs) to allude to transnational students who are trying to cement their proficiency of Spanish in Spanish-speaking countries.

**Chapter 2 Summary**

Chapter 2 reviewed the existent literature on Mexican and U.S. scholarship. The two major topics identified were issues related to the burden of parental deportation, and the general state of transnational students in Mexico. These two topics were divided into themes that served to situate my study within a larger context or U.S. and Mexican research, and to identify the gaps that justify the need for this study, namely, the lack of studies focusing on parental deportation, the lack of gendered perspectives and social justice approaches, and the disregard for funds of knowledge of transnational students. Chapter 3 will delineate my methodological approach, including a detailed account of my research design, data collection methods, and data analysis.
“Necesitamos teorías [we need theories] that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries – new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods…”

Anzaldúa (1990, pp. xxv-xxvi)

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 1 presented the background, rationale, and theoretical framework of my research. Chapter 2 offered a review of the literature, identifying the gaps that justify the need for this study. Chapter 3 delineates my methodological approach. First, I state my positionality and make an argument for my choice of methodology. Then I offer an overview and brief review of the literature on the Critical Communicative Methodology. Next, I follow with a thorough description of the research design, including its detailed execution. Finally, I present a discussion of ethical considerations and limitations. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Restatement of the Problem

The Mexican census of 2010 identified over a half a million U.S.-born school aged children living in Mexico (Kline, 2013), many of them came with their deported parents. This qualitative study investigated the experiences of transnational students ages 9-17 attending schools in a northern border city of Mexico due to parental deportation in order to determine their needs, but most importantly, their modes of resistance, and human agency.

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is first, to document the educational experiences of transnational students attending schools in a border city in northern Mexico due to the deportation of their parents, in order to understand the obstacles they face and the support they need; second, to investigate the difference in their experiences due to gender; third, to recognize
their level of critical awareness; and fourth, to understand types of resistance and coping mechanism displayed by transnational students.

**Restatement of the Research Questions**

1. How are the educational experiences of transnational youth enrolled in schools in northern Mexico shaped by parental deportation?
2. In what ways do the educational experiences of transnational students differ due to gender?
3. How, if at all, does the use of dialogic processes raise the critical consciousness of transnational students regarding their educational experiences?
4. How, if at all, do transnational youth enact transformational, and other types of resistance to obstacles in their educational experiences, and more broadly?

**Worldview and Positionality of the Researcher**

There is no value-free research (Kloper, 2008). The researcher’s worldview and implicit values are infused in the researcher’s decisions. Creswell and Plano (2011) encourage researchers to honor and write about their worldviews in their research. Therefore, my choice of topic, approach to the study, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology, reveal my standpoint as a critical researcher. I favor emancipatory paradigms that honor the voices of underrepresented groups and that advocate for change on issues of social injustice. In this context, *critical* is a paradigm that acknowledges power differentials and challenges the status quo.

**Rationale for the Selection of Methodology**

Given the feminist and social justice approach to my qualitative study –thoroughly discussed in chapter 1, I was interested in a qualitative methodology with advocacy and
participatory elements. As Papoutsaki (2007) argues, research is one of the ways in which hegemonic dominant paradigms are kept in place. Therefore, researchers who are committed to disrupting oppressive powers (Sandoval, 2000) and engaging in academic scholarship with a social justice focus (Salazar & Rios, 2016) must pay particular attention to their choice of research topics, epistemologies, and methodologies. Therefore, my goal for choosing the right methodology was, first, to challenge hegemonic politics of knowledge, and second, to bring the educational experiences of U.S.-born transnational youth in Mexico from the margins to the center. With this goal in mind, I embarked on an exhaustive research for feminist, emancipatory, decolonizing, and indigenous methodologies, until I found Gómez, Latorre, Sánchez, and Flecha’s (2006) Critical Communicative Methodology (CCM). The CCM combines academic and non-academic knowledge, where participants contribute their lived experiences while researchers contribute theoretical know-how in an egalitarian manner (Gómez, Racionero, & Sordé, 2010). Consensus about reality is reached through extensive dialogic interactions where participant co-researchers are involved in all stages of the research design and dissemination to the extent they want to participate. The goal of the CCM is to study reality in order to transform it. For purposes of this study, participants were referred to as co-researchers throughout this research. In addition, researcher and participants were referred to as research team to denote egalitarian interactions.

**Overview of The Critical Communicative Methodology**

The CCM is a dialogic process between the researcher and co-researchers aiming to critically analyze reality in order to transform unjust social conditions. The CCM uses three main data collection methods, communicative life histories, communicative focus groups, and communicative observations, where communicative denotes the highly dialogic interactions
among research and participant co-researchers throughout the data collection process. Under the CCM, data analysis identifies situations of exclusion, but most importantly, situations of transformation to overcome exclusion.

**Theoretical, Ontological, and Epistemological Foundations**

At its core, the CCM is based on communication and dialogue, and rests on three main theoretical pillars explained in detail by Racionero and Padrós (2010). They include: Habermas’ (1984) *theory of communicative action*, which postulates that all human beings are capable of coming to understanding and consensus through dialogue; Freire’s (2014) *theory of dialogic action*, that promotes dialogue, critical consciousness, and emancipation; and Flecha’s (2000) *theory of dialogic learning*, that advocates for change through egalitarian dialogue and social/personal transformation.

The CCM’s ontological perspective contends that reality is socially constructed, as such, its validity depends on the meanings we ascribe to our reality. It builds upon Vygotsky’s (1978) idea that learning starts with social interactions, and in González, Moll, and Amanti’s (2005) understanding that learning cannot be separated from the communities in which it takes place. Epistemologically, the CCM argues that experiential knowledge and empirical knowledge are equally valuable (Gómez et al., 2010.)

Taking the above foundations as a point of departure, the CCM postulates that learning takes place when we interact with diverse people, when life experiences are valued as much as academic experiences, when we use dialogue to come to consensus about our reality, and when we use our human agency to change our reality once we gain a critical understanding of our world. When we engage in such interactions, we attain higher levels of personal and social transformation (Racionero & Padrós, 2010).
A Brief Review of the Literature on the CCM

The CCM has been used extensively in educational evaluation and social inclusion in Barcelona, Spain. A large-scale project using CCM was INCLUD-ED, a project funded by the European Union to study the quality of education in Europe that focused on successful educational strategies to overcome social and educational marginalization (Flecha, García, Gómez, & Latorre, 2009; Flecha, 2015; Puigvert, Christou, & Holford, 2012; Yeste, Ferrada, & Ruiz, 2011). Additionally, WORKALÓ was a research project that focused on Roma people – one of the most historically marginalized groups in Spain – to highlight the funds of knowledge found in Roma communities in order to increase their participation in society (Flecha, Vargas, & Dávila, 2004). The rest of the literature on CCM was theoretical (Flecha et al., 2004; Gómez & Díez, 2009; Gómez et al., 2010; Puigvert, et al., 2012; Racionero & Padrós, 2010), focusing on the tenets of the methodology with a clear tendency to highlight its significance to the field.

Other Methodological Approaches Considered

Before settling on the CCM, I considered phenomenology, critical case study, and participatory action research (Creswell, 2007; Marshal & Rossman, 2016). Phenomenology seemed appropriate for the emphasis on the collective meaning that a particular group assigns to a phenomenon they have experienced, however, it lacked the emancipatory element needed for this study. Next, I considered critical case study, but I discarded it because I wanted to be very conscientious about my choice of a research methodology with a clear advocacy stance. Finally, I considered participatory action research, however, although it met my participatory requirement, I was discouraged by its heavy reliance on the participant co-researchers, as I recognized that my participants might not have the time or desire to partake fully in all aspects of the research design.
Criteria to Establish Rigor in the Critical Communicative Methodology

As Clark (2016) contends, alternative fields—and their research methodologies—have a cold reception by traditional scholars and journals largely because of their counterhegemonic nature. The academy is even more skeptical if the knowledge production comes from non-dominant groups that foreground otros saberes or other ways of knowing. For this reason, it is important to note that the researcher’s passion, her close connection to the research problem, and the presence of unavoidable biases are not seen as signs of lack of rigor; on the contrary, they are turned into research tools. It is the ability of the researcher to use those biases to guide her research, to challenge the status quo, and to use the knowledge from her research to solve everyday problems that deems a research project rigorous.

In particular, the rigor of a CCM project is determined by the crystallization of data through different data gathering techniques (Marshal & Rossman, 2016) and the replicability of the study, but most importantly, by the impact of the study on social transformation. It is also important to design a coherent research to ensure the non-hierarchical and equal participation of the research team. Finally, an essential indicator of rigor for a CCM project is its use of dialogue to reach consensus about reality among research team members.

Connecting Transnational Students, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

U.S.-born transnational students in Mexico are considered a vulnerable population, not only because they were uprooted from their birthplace, but also because deportation posed an added burden for them on both sides of the border. Often, structural elements that aggravate the vulnerability of marginalized populations are ignored, the human agency of vulnerable populations is underplayed, and as stated by Flecha and Gómez (2004), research is done “on” rather than “with” them, causing their voices to be absent from their own realities. Therefore, this
research adopted a theoretical framework that situated transnational students’ experiences in a global and neoliberal context, that included all their voices, and that took into consideration their capacity to transform their trauma into healing through social justice work. This was complemented with the use of the CCM, which, through egalitarian dialogic interactions between researcher and participants, seeks to understand reality in order to transform it, thus, emphasizing human agency. This interconnection is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Topic, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology Connections
Role of the Researcher

In my role as the person responsible for designing this study, I tried to ensure that the needs and interests of my co-researchers were reflected, and not just my own. As such, this research required a close relationship with my co-researchers. Developing such closeness lent itself to obtaining more authentic data, but it also required careful reflection about my inherent biases, privileges, and assumptions. For example, I tried to be aware of my biases every time my co-researchers implicitly anticipated some kind of compensation for their participation, recognizing that this may possibly be a survival mechanism on their part. I tried to resist Eurocentric views by respecting the local cultural tradition of a more relaxed sense of time and duty, recognizing that to my co-researchers, our time socializing and getting to know each other was more valuable than our time interviewing. At times, I felt tempted to rush the data gathering process, but instead, I let the relationship building take its natural course. Lastly, recognizing my privilege, I was hyper aware of the power differentials, therefore, I tried to make our interactions as nonhierarchical as possible. Finally, my participants’ experiences shaped and re-shaped my approach to the research questions and my interpretation of the findings. For example, I came into the study with the intention to focus only on transformational resistance, but my participants showed me that they don’t follow a linear path to transformation, guiding me to consider all forms of resistance instead. My role in this research then, was reflective, dialogic, egalitarian, and participatory.

Research Design

This study used the CCM as a methodology, however, it contains elements of an action research design (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) in that it started as exploratory to understand the participants’ reality, used dialogic strategies, and carried out a plan to advocate for change. It
followed a cyclical pattern of planning-action-reflection and revision of the plan that resulted in three modifications requiring IRB approval. Changes to the study design are described throughout the following sections as they occurred. Additionally, unforeseen circumstances greatly limited my co-researchers’ involvement in this study design, among them, the lack of familiarity with the research process, availability constraints caused by lack of technology, and school/work obligations.

**Setting and Context**

This study was conducted from March to October of 2017 in the city of Alamar,¹ in the northern border region of Mexico. It took place at the Grupo de Apoyo para Alumnos Migrantes (GAAM) or Support Group for Migrant Students. GAAM is a government organization that is part of the State Educational System. Its main objective is the identification and record keeping of transnational students statewide in order to provide them with educational and psychological support. In addition, I also had a key informant from Madres por la Reunificación [Mothers for Reunification], a non-profit civil organization in Alamar founded by deported parents who advocate for the reunification of families separated by deportation.

**Site Rationale**

I chose to work with GAAM because it serves my target population of transnational students in the city of Alamar. Although it concentrates on migrant students from all over the world, including Central and South America, Russia, Haiti, and China, they keep a database that desegregates students by birthplace and by reason for returning to Mexico. This database was instrumental for finding participants for this research. I chose to work with Madres por la Reunificación because the members of the organization are all deportees, which means that

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¹ All names of people and places are pseudonyms.
through the mothers I would automatically have access to my targeted transnational student population. With both organizations, the step of asking potential participants for their legal status was eliminated. I learned about both organizations doing research in the Internet. Gaining access to research sites in Mexico was a challenge. I contacted GAAM in September of 2016, and by November I had not heard from them. It was then that I decided to look for a second site, and that’s how I found Madres. The president of Madres por la Reunificación, a deported mother herself, showed a great interest in my research and responded to my contact request only hours after I emailed her. GAAM finally answered my emails in April of 2017, seven months after my first contact attempt. However, after establishing contact, GAAM was extremely helpful and became instrumental in the implementation of this research. Alamar, in northern Mexico, was chosen because it was identified in the literature as having one of the largest concentrations of transnational students (Masferrer & Roberts, 2012; Rocha & Ocegueda, 2013). Currently, nearly 32,000 transnational students are studying in Alamar, according to GAAM’s records. Coincidentally, I keep close personal and professional ties with the city since the 1990s, which made it easier to build relationships in my research sites.

**Population**

This study included U.S.-born and Mexico-born youth ages 9-17 that were forced to move to Mexico due to the deportation of their parent(s), and that attended schools in Alamar. In addition, this study included mothers of the participants and the GAAM coordinator. More details included in the sample size section below.

**Sample Rationale**

This study focused on U.S. and Mexico-born born transnational youth who live in Alamar as a direct result of their parents’ deportation. Children whose parents had returned
voluntarily were not considered. This is mainly because I wanted to concentrate on the added challenge deportation poses on transnational students, specifically, their inability to return to the U.S. because of the legal status of their parents, despite children’s U.S. citizenship. Originally, I planned to include only U.S.-born students ages 12-18, because Glick and Yabiku (2016) showed that school enrollment rates in Mexican schools start to decline sharply for students at this age, but especially for U.S.-born students who have been living in Mexico for less that 5 years (see Figure 6). Therefore, I intended to focus on this group for a higher social impact.

However, the sample rationale changed during the course of my first round of data collection. After the first interviews, two trends that were worth investigating became evident: first, there were also Mexico-born siblings in the family; and second, younger children sometimes experienced a more severe traumatic impact than older siblings due to their uprooting.
Therefore, I decided to make a modification –requiring IRB approval– to lower the age of participants to include 9-17 year olds, and to include Mexico-born siblings in order to capture the experiences of all members of the family. Mothers were included in this study because their deportation stories allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which transnational students arrive in Mexico. The only two fathers contacted declined to participate. Finally, the GAAM representative was included to provide an institutional perspective of the educational needs of transnational youth.

**Sampling Strategies**

I used *criterion sampling* (Marshal & Rossman, 2016) to identify participants. For transnational students, the criteria for consideration were: 1) They had to be U.S.-born youth, or Mexico-born youth who had lived in the U.S. for over 2/3 of their lives and had almost native-like knowledge of U.S. culture. 2) They had to be ages 9-17. 3) They had to attend Mexican schools due to the deportation of their parent(s).

For adult participants, the criteria were:

1) They had to be the parent of one of my transnational youth participants, and their return to Mexico had to be the result of a deportation; or 2) They had to be the coordinator of the GAAM program.

I intended to use *snowball sampling*, however, I discontinued it because my participants only knew families with children younger than 9 that did not meet my age criterion.

**Sample Size**

This study included a total of 13 participants (shown in Table 2). They included: 9 transnational students ages 9-16, 3 mothers, and 1 GAAM coordinator.
Table 2. Sampling Table per Family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade (Mexican Equivalent)</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Years in Mexico</th>
<th>Age Upon Return</th>
<th>Lived in Other States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family A: “It’s A Struggle”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>Queretaro, Leon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10th (2nd semester of preparatory)</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Queretaro, Leon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grecia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Queretaro, Leon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family B: “Pretty Messed Up”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10th (2nd semester of preparatory)</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nayarit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7th (1st year of secondary school)</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nayarit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nayarit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family C: “Familia Muégano”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10th (1st semester of preparatory)</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrián</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9th (3rd year of secondary school)</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAAM Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaining Access

Once I established communication, first with Madres por la Reunificación, and then with GAAM, I kept in close communication with Yareli and Eva, my key informants. Gaining access
to Mothers –the civil organization– was less formal, necessitating only a few emails and telephone conversations. For GAAM –the government organization– it was more complicated. They requested a meeting with the coordinator to explain my project face-to-face. Therefore, I had to make a trip to Alamar to meet their request. After I thoroughly explained my research project to my key informants, either in email and phone conversations, or in person, they agreed to grant me access to their organizations after my IRB approval was finalized.

**Recruitment**

After obtaining IRB approval, I contacted Yareli, from Madres, to proceed with participant recruitment. This is because initially, Madres was my only research site. Yareli informed me that I did not need to attend the meetings held at her organization, because, since she was already very familiar with the nature of the study, she had talked to five deported mothers that met my criteria and they had agreed to talk to me. I contacted the five mothers by phone, and after finding more about their situation I realized three did not meet my criteria because their children did not live in Mexico. I thanked them for their interest and I explained why they could not be part of my study. The two other mothers met my criteria, and after being invited, they and their children agreed to participate in my study. We then set a date for me to travel to Alamar for an interview.

After my first round of data collection, it became evident that I was going to need a second research site because Madres had no more candidates. After another modification to obtain IRB approval to include GAAM as an additional research site, Eva identified three families in her database that met my criteria, and made the initial contact. Then I called to invite the families to participate in my study. Only one family agreed to participate, and we set up an appointment for an interview with the mother and her children during my next trip to Alamar.
Interestingly, from the two families that declined, I spoke to the fathers in both cases. Although
the fathers showed interest initially, they changed their attitude the minute I mentioned
deporation as a criterion to participate. At that point, they completely changed their version
arguing that their children were no longer living in the city, or that they were circular migrants
who crossed the border frequently. I deducted that fathers might be more reluctant than mothers
to participate in a study where they would be exposed as vulnerable. This could also be
explained by the stigma surrounding deportation and the lack of trust among Mexicans,
especially in the era of the Trump administration.

Consent Procedures

Mothers and children that agreed to be part of the study were walked through the consent
and assent processes. I explained to participants that they had the choice to participate in all,
some, or none of the data collection methods without repercussions. After I explained the
research procedures, risks, benefits, and expectations to participants, and clarified any questions
they had, participants were asked to sign the consent form, assent form, and/or parent permission
form as appropriate. Mothers were provided with a copy of everything that they signed. Forms
were provided in English and Spanish at the request of participants, since Spanish is my first
language, I was in charge of translating documents from English to Spanish and vice versa. My
role as the translator for this research project was formalized through a Translator’s Statement
approved by the IRB. In the case of FaceTime interviews, the consent process took place
electronically, I sent the forms by email and parents sent a picture of the signed forms.

Timeline

Table 3 details the timeline I followed for this research project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>Additional information provided, proposal pe-submitted for IRB Approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successfully defended research proposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>Obtained IRB approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2017</td>
<td>Began the recruitment process. First trip to Alamar for data collection: Pre-Interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>Second trip to Alamar for second round of data collection: Testimonios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional modifications required. Proposal re-submitted for IRB approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Translation and transcription of data collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>IRB modifications approved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>Third trip to Alamar for a second round of Pre-Interviews with new participants. Interview with GAAM coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>Ongoing data organization, data translation, data transcription, and data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapters 1, 2, and 3 polished according to committee’s feedback from proposal defense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>Fourth Trip to Alamar for a last round of data collection: Focus Groups and Observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing data organization, data translation, data transcription, and data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Post-Interviews via FaceTime Finalized the Findings, Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications sections. Submitted dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Successfully Defended Dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Submitted Dissertation to Graduate College. Graduated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Data was collected from March to October of 2017 in Alamar, a border city in northern Mexico. Table 4 shows the connections between the data and research questions.

Table 4. Connection of Data Sources and Data Analysis to Research Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Timeline 2017</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Connections to Lit/Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. How are the educational experiences of transnational youth enrolled in schools in northern Mexico shaped by parental deportation?</td>
<td>Interviews Testimonios Focus Grps Observations</td>
<td>March April July October</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA) Transformational &amp; Exclusory Factors</td>
<td>Lit Review Transnat’l Feminism Dialogic Feminism Coyolxauhqui Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. In what ways do the educational experiences of transnational students differ due to gender?</td>
<td>Interviews Testimonios</td>
<td>March April July October</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA) Transformational &amp; Exclusory Factors</td>
<td>Lit Review Dialogic Feminism Coyolxauhqui Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. How does the use of dialogic processes raise the critical consciousness of transnational students regarding their educational experiences?</td>
<td>Interviews Testimonios Focus Grps</td>
<td>March April July September</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA) Transformational &amp; Exclusory Factors</td>
<td>Lit Review Dialogic Feminism Coyolxauhqui Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. How do transnational youth enact transformational, and other types of resistance to obstacles in their educational experiences, and more broadly?</td>
<td>Interviews Testimonios Focus Grps Observations</td>
<td>March April July October</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA) Transformational &amp; Exclusory Factors</td>
<td>Lit Review Dialogic Feminism Coyolxauhqui Imperative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Sources

Data sources (shown in Figure 7) included communicative pre and post interviews, testimonio sessions, focus groups (including artifacts produced during focus group sessions) and observations. Data collection, sources, and analysis are explained in detail in the next sections. Connections to the literature and/or theory are explained in detail in Chapter 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 7. Data Sources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonios (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups Artifacts (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews

This study included a total of 17 semi-structured interviews. I conducted 9 pre interviews with transnational students (Appendix A), 3 interviews with parents (Appendix B), 1 interview with the GAAM coordinator (Appendix C), and 2 post interviews (Appendix D) with one adult and one child. In addition, 2 follow-up interviews were conducted with my adult participants to
clarify ambiguous points. Interviews took place in several public places in Alamar, including my hotel lobby and local Starbucks coffee shops. Interviews also took place remotely via FaceTime or WhatsApp video. Interviews were very dialogic, following the CCM tradition, this dialogue resulted in a more intimate exchange that did not feel like an interrogation. I engaged in brief conversations with participants to ask for further explanations and/or examples, or to share my own experiences at times. In turn, I was able to obtain more in-depth information and to establish closer relationships with my co-researchers, especially with my teenage participants who welcomed a less formal interaction with an adult, something that is not customary in Mexico.

The purpose of pre interviews with transnational youth was to contextualize their educational experiences in the face of parental deportation. They talked about their life in the U.S., their arrival to Mexico, their experiences in U.S. and Mexican schools, the differences in school experiences based on gender, and their needs and sources of support. We concluded with a topic of their choice that I had not covered. This initial guided conversation, following the dialogic nature of the CCM, allowed me to explore intersections with race, class, gender, and other areas of oppression during their description of their experiences. Based on the preliminary findings of the first interviews, questions for testimonios and focus groups sessions were modified to include the issues children participants had identified.

Interviews with parents helped me to learn about their stories of deportation, and to understand how those experiences impacted their children. In this regard, my familiarity with the local context, culture, symbols, and local language proved very beneficial, as I was able to connect with parents immediately, and they were able to open up about their experiences. In our interviews, parents talked about their stories of deportation, their challenges and successes navigating the Mexican educational system, the educational needs of their children, and the ways
in which parents can be supported to help their children to better navigate their new school environments. Parents also helped me understand how cultural and family contexts differently shape the experiences of transnational youth. Surprisingly, if not specifically prompted, parents did not bring up any gendered differences in the experiences of their children. From all the interviews, those with parents were the most emotional. Nevertheless, they refused to stop the interviews, arguing that speaking openly about their deportation was therapeutic for them. After the first two interviews with parents, nothing could have prepared me for the emotional toll listening to their deportation stories took on me. It took me days to shake off the feeling of helplessness and the overwhelming sense of obligation I felt toward these families, and lots of self-reflection to regain focus and keep my sense of purpose. During this overwhelming period, I reached out to my dissertation chair to seek out her personal and professional assistance in helping me sort out my feelings. Her expert opinion allowed me to regain clarity and to not let my feelings cloud my research.

The interview with the GAAM representative allowed me to understand the experiences of transnational students from an institutional perspective. The interview covered practices used to identify their target population, the process of enrolment to Mexican schools, challenges and successes of transnational students in Alamar, teacher preparation, and effectiveness of the program.

Finally, post interviews with transnational youth and their parents after initial interviews, testimonio sessions, and focus groups, allowed me to determine if the dialogic nature of the data gathering, characterized by ample opportunities for the research team to engage in dialogue in a nonhierarchical manner during data collection, had any influence on raising their critical consciousness and/or their desire to take active steps to engage in social and personal change.
Testimonios

I made a modification to the CCM by replacing the communicative life histories with testimonios. I felt testimonios were more appropriate for this project for two reasons: first, “testimonio differs from oral history […] in that it involves the critical reflection of their personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities” (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012, p. 364). Second, the uprooting of U.S.-born students is being argued in this research as a form of social trauma, therefore, testimonios have a healing effect. Anzaldúa (2015) “identifies storytelling with healing and associates it with progressive and sociopolitical change” (p. xxxii). Furthermore, in the re-telling of events, “people can recreate, reshape, and interrupt normative narratives” (Tracy Fisher, 2012 as cited in Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 88).

This study included 3 testimonio sessions (Appendix E) with youth participants ages 15-16. Mothers were not invited to participate because the focus was on the experiences of transnational students. For this part of the data collection, I explained to all my youth participants that this would be a very personal narrative about their migration to Mexico and that they would have freedom in their choice of topics and methods. They were given the choice to write a journal, make a video, tell their story through pictures, or meet with me. Since they said they were not sure what to write about, they chose to meet with me for a more guided session. Younger participants usually declined this part of the data collection, mentioning they had already told me everything in the interviews. This seems to suggest that a more personal form of data collection –in which participants use their own voices with minimum intervention from the researcher, was more appealing to older participants; or that my design of the testimonio session was flawed. I will be able to determine this in future research studies. For testimonios, I modified my questions to reflect the topics identified in the interviews, and to serve as an initial guide,
leaving the final choice of topics to the participant. As suggested by Perez-Huber (2009), flexibility in testimonios is key. Testimonial sessions took place at a local Starbucks in Alamar, or via FaceTime.

Data obtained from testimonios helped me to capture the complexity of transnational youth’s educational experiences, the differences in experiences based on gender, as well as to recognize their level of critical consciousness (or the lack thereof), and the resistance mechanisms employed by transnational youth. With the preliminary findings of the testimonio sessions, combined with those of the interviews, I was able to re-design the focus group sessions.

**Focus Groups (and Focus Group Artifacts)**

This study included 5 focus group sessions that involved transnational students as well as their mothers. All three families agreed to participate in the focus groups, however, only two families attended the sessions. Of the two families in attendance, one 16-year-old participant could not attend because of his extracurricular activities, and another 15-year-old participant could not attend because she had to attend school on Saturday. The family that did not show up later reported they could not attend because two of the children got sick that day. In total, 6 participants took place in the focus groups, 2 adults and four minors.

Focus groups were conducted as an adaptation of Pérez-DaSilva’s (2016) Critical Dialogue Cycles, intended to accompany participants in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing their educational and life experiences to reinforce the critical consciousness process. I decided to make the focus groups more interactive for the younger children; therefore, I designed hands-on activities and discussions modeled after a Social Justice course I took during my program, which resulted in artifacts developed during the activities that became part of the
data collection and analysis. A compilation of topics covered based on the preliminary findings from the interviews and testimonios is included in Figure 8.

The first focus group session consisted of two initial introductory activities, the first, *Creating a Peace Zone* (Diamond, n.d.), was designed to establish participation rules collectively; the second, *Who Am I?* was an activity in which the participants chose from a variety of pictures and images to create a collage to describe to the group how they viewed
themselves. This was designed as a critical self-exploration for the participant, and to establish trust and rapport by getting to know each member of the group more deeply. The second focus group consisted of the prompt Your Education in Mexico, and consisted on analyzing a picture with two tracking fields, one free of obstacles and the other full of obstructions. This activity was designed as a critical reflection of the structural causes that led participants to attend school in Alamar, and to identify the obstacles as well as successes they have experienced in Mexican schools. The third focus group session consisted of a hands-on activity called Power and Privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). To explore privilege, I had participants do the exercise in which they have to throw a crumbled piece of paper into a basket from their seats. To explore power, I posted a picture of three fish, the biggest eating the smallest, as a representation of how the most powerful gets to dominate the more vulnerable. The activity had two purposes: firstly, it sought to engage parents and students in a critical reflection of structural inequalities that led them to migrate to the U.S. and to be deported, so that they could connect their present situation to larger neoliberal structures. Secondly, it sought to engage participants in a critical reflection of the institutional, cultural, social, and other barriers they faced in Mexican schools. After the activity, children and adults were engaged in a discussion of their experiences, which led to a reflection of their emotions. In this way, connections between the macro, meso, and micro were made. The fourth focus group session consisted of the activity What Can We Change? For this activity, I prepared several slides showing pictures of concerns expressed to me during our interviews and testimonio sessions. As we viewed the slides, we reflected on whether or not we could do something to change the issue that bothered or affected us. This exercise intended to elicit transnational students’ sense of agency by discussing whether or not we had the skills, faculties, resources, and tools to change the situation. This led to our fifth and final focus group
session that consisted of the activity *The Staircase* (Knox, n.d.), which I renamed the Micro to Macro Staircase, designed to collectively find feasible solutions to a problem by asking what international, national, and local governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) can do, in addition to what can our communities, schools, or groups that we belong to can do. Finally, it asks what our classrooms and we as individuals can do, so that our solutions can inform educational policy locally, nationally, and internationally.

In conducting the focus groups, my experience facilitating multicultural college courses and my fluency in English and Spanish languages proved valuable. This allowed me to conduct the focus groups sessions in Spanish so that the mothers could participate, and to design activities and discussions that were meaningful for my co-researchers. Unfortunately, due to limited availability, we had to cover all five sessions in one meeting, as arranging multiple meetings was not possible because it would have interfered with some of the moms’ work schedules, and they could not take multiple days off. Recognizing my co-researchers’ needs, I had to be flexible and make the most of our time. Fortunately, our single meeting proved to be productive based on the debriefing with co-researchers.

Data obtained from the focus groups provided a deeper understanding of my co-researchers’ reality by engaging in dialogue about their experiences in order to identify oppressive factors, resistance modes, and to develop a sense of transformative agency to improve their situations. Findings from the focus groups allowed me to determine the presence (or lack) of critical consciousness, coping mechanisms, and sense of agency of participants.

**Observations**

During the interviews, one family shared the great experience they had with a public elementary school that showed a great level of support and sensitivity to the needs of
transnational students. Since the family also had children in middle school, I decided to observe at both, the elementary and the middle school to analyze their practices. I asked the GAAM coordinator to assist me in gaining access to the two schools, and after the proper documentation was approved by the State Educational Department, I made my last trip to Alamar for data collection.

This study included 3 observations, one at an elementary school, one at a middle school, and one at a Mexican university where GAAM was conducting a presentation. Formal access permits were required and obtained from the State Education Department to visit the public schools, but not the university because it was a public event.

The observation at the public elementary school lasted approximately 1.5 hours. Because the principal was very interested in finding out how he could better support his transnational students, he asked to see me along with a GAAM representative. Therefore, most of the observation time was spent having a conversation with the principal regarding support for migrant students in general and for U.S.-born students in particular. By the time our meeting with the principal was finished, the children were in P.E., therefore, I only got to see their interactions outdoors. I must clarify that my conversation with the principal aligned perfectly with my participants’ interview data, therefore, this meeting with the principal served in the crystallization process, thus, adding to the trustworthiness of this study.

The observation at the public middle school lasted about 1 hour. This observation took place with a 9th grade group attending school in the evening because in Mexico, schools have morning and evening shifts in order to maximize school space. My observation started at 4:00 P.M. while students were in their Spanish class, which is the equivalent to the English class in the U.S. At the observation, I learned that besides my participant, there were other two male
U.S.-born students in the classroom. Because this study was coming to an end, I did not make an effort to recruit them. When the class was over and students went to recess, I spent about 15 minutes talking informally with the Spanish teacher.

The observation of the GAAM presentation lasted close to 2 hours and took place at the Alamar Autonomous University. GAAM has a partnership with this university to provide support to transnational students. The partnership is mutually beneficial for both institutions in that the GAAM coordinator, who is also a faculty member at the university, gives her students the option to do their internships at GAAM by helping to keep the database up to date, and/or by providing psychological support to transnational students. University students are tasked with visiting schools throughout Alamar in search of transnational students either for record-keeping purposes or to offer psychological assistance. Therefore, the presentation I observed showcased GAAM’s program, services, and objectives, to promote a higher participation among psychology and pedagogy university students.

The information obtained from the observations allowed me to have a holistic view of the educational experiences of transnational students by capturing the perspectives of school staff and by observing my participants in their interactions with their peers and teachers. In addition, at the GAAM’s presentation observation, I learned more about the program and about the general perception of Alamar’s residents toward transnational students. School staff was not involved more formally than in conversations during my observations because at the time of the study design I did not know if I would be able to gain access to the schools, and therefore, I was unable to secure IRB approval for school staff participation. By the time I gained access, the study was coming to an end, making it impossible to go through another round of IRB approved modifications.
Data Analysis

The plan was for my co-researchers to take an active role in the data analysis phase of this study, however, because one family lacked the technology for online communication, two families had restricting work schedules, and all three families had children going to school mornings and evenings, getting them involved in the data analysis was not feasible. Other deterrents were the lack of familiarity with the research process, and the belief among participants that they were not qualified to contribute to this project, preventing them to see themselves as active subjects in their own research. This knowledge divide, according to Zavala (2016), is perpetuated by the classist and racist attitudes present among Mexican intellectuals. All families, however, felt comfortable with the member-checking process, fully participating by clarifying information and approving my interpretation of the data via phone conversations.

Managing Data

I de-identified raw data by assigning pseudonyms to participants and keeping the key that connects names to pseudonyms in a separate document in a password-protected computer. I transcribed all interviews and testimonios verbatim, and translated all data collected in Spanish into English. I did not transcribe my focus group sessions. Focus groups were left in their video recording format, and artifacts created during the focus groups were converted to pictures, because the data analysis software I used allowed me to code directly from video and images. Although videos and artifacts were left in their original Spanish language format, I coded them in English. Observations were checked for grammatical errors and coded directly from my notes.

Before delving into analysis, I explored the data by reading through the transcripts, viewing videos, and re-reading observations. During this familiarization process, I wrote analytical memos and notes to self with important impressions, for example, by noting
connections of the data to research questions, literature, and theory. This data managing stage
gave way to my first set of codes, which included emergent as well as predetermined codes that I
developed in my codebook. A thorough discussion of code development is found in the coding
section, and an extract of an analytical memo can be seen in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Extract of Analytical Memo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions/Themes/Coding Colors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How are the educational experiences of transnational youth shaped by parental deportation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In what ways do the educational experiences of transnational students differ due to gender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does the use of dialogic processes raise the critical consciousness of transnational students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do transnational youth enact transformational resistance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusory Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory/Literature Related Themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theoretical Framework

1. Transnational Feminism TF (Border Crossing, migration, globalization)
2. Dialogic Feminism DF (Gender, inclusiveness, power dynamics, critical consciousness)
3. ColoIxhauqui Imperative CI (Resistance, Critical Consciousness Social healing, work for SJ)

Thematic Analysis Decisions:
Sources: (Braun & Clarke, 2006), (Boyatzis, 1998). Include in Dissertation Ch 3
(Can I use a hybrid approach?)

- **Theme**: Captures something important about the research questions
- **Rich description**: (under-researched topic, breadth over depth) of data set or detailed account of one aspect (nuanced description of one aspect or research question, depth over breadth) Hybrid
- **Inductive**: (data driven, coding drives the research ?) vs. **Theoretical** (theory driven, code for specific research ?) thematic analysis Hybrid
- **Semantic**: (literal meaning, no interpretation) or **Latent themes**: (underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations, ideologies, theorizing) Latent Used
- **Epistemology**: Essentialist/realist (theorizing motivations, experience and meaning straightforwardly) vs. **Constructionist** (Theorizing the sociocultural and structural conditions, a latent theme tends to be constructionist). Constructionist used
- **Unit of Analysis**: Per participant or per family? (Boyatzis, 1998) Hybrid
- **Unit of Coding**: Each individual participant, and each data source (interview, etc.) ? (Boyatzis, 1998) Hybrid
Coding

Due to the magnitude of the data gathered, I used MAXQDA, a software program for data analysis. MAXQDA was chosen because of my familiarity using it in my methodology courses. I used thematic analysis to analyze data. The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose this form of analysis because of my familiarity using it in research projects with faculty during my graduate assistantship. In the step-by-step guide developed by Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis patterns are identified through a rigorous process that begins with data familiarization, continues with the development of codes, and is followed by the development, revision, and definition of themes. The process ends with a narrative that contextualizes the themes and connects them to research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework. To accomplish this, the researcher performs a free line-by-line coding of the data, organizes these free codes into descriptive themes, and generates analytical themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

To develop codes, I consulted Boyatzis’ (1998) *Thematic Analysis and Code Development* book. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to make several decisions before coding begins (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke 2006). My decisions for this study were: to offer a rich thematic description of my entire data set, focusing on individual aspects that answered my research questions. I used inductive (data driven) codes as well as theoretical (theory and literature driven) codes, described in Chapter 4. Although many of my codes were semantic, meaning that no interpretation was needed, many others were latent, meaning that I had to use my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) to interpret underlying ideas, assumptions, and
ideologies in order to theorize the meaning behind them. Epistemologically, I used a constructionist approach that took into consideration sociocultural conditions. My unit of analysis was based on the family first, and then on each individual participant. Last, my unit of coding was based first, on each data source (interviews, testimonios, focus groups and observations) and then I focused on participant category (transnational student, parent, or GAAM coordinator) to offer a complete view of the findings. The development of a code element table in the first stages of code development was very useful, as it forced me to consider the connections of the code to the research questions, theory, and literature. Additionally, as required in the CCM, transformative and exclusory factors were also included. See an example in Table 5.

Table 5. Code Elements (Adapted from Boyatzis, 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A-Priori Codes</th>
<th>Description/Example</th>
<th>How to Recognize</th>
<th>Qualifications/Exclusions</th>
<th>Rsrch?</th>
<th>Theory Lit Rev Exc/ Tra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uprooting</td>
<td>When participant has been involuntarily removed from what they call “home”</td>
<td>Brought about by parental deportation</td>
<td>Moved from U.S. to Mexico. Not from Mexico to U.S.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Th/CI Exc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Inauthentically Mexican”</td>
<td>When participants are judged for not speaking or acting like native Mexicans</td>
<td>Participants are perceived as not being assimilated (deficit-based)</td>
<td>Prompted by nationalistic, xenophobic, narrow-minded sentiments</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
<td>LitRev Hamann et al., 2006 Exc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disempowered</td>
<td>Participants have no control over a situation or do not feel heard.</td>
<td>Participant expresses frustration for issues of power dynamics</td>
<td>Power dynamics are the main factor, one party is more powerful than the other</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Th/CI Exc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LR = Literature Review  
Th = Theoretical Framework  
TF = Transnational Feminism  
DF = Dialogic Feminism  
CI = Coyolxauhqui Imperative  
Tra = Transformational Factors  
Exc = Exclusory Factors
Data Interpretation

Coded data were interpreted to assess how well research questions were answered, how well the theoretical lens was addressed, and how the findings compared with the reviewed literature. Originally, I had intended to involve co-researchers in this phase, however, participation was not possible due to the constraints described before. Therefore, I was the only person involved in data interpretation, which allowed me the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the findings, draw conclusions, and pose questions for future studies.

Data Validation

I used *crystallization* (Ellingson, 2009) to validate the data. Crystallization conceptualizes validity through the metaphor of how a crystal reflects and refracts (represented in Figure 10) and it is used to understand how various qualitative methods fit together to inform one another (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I found crystallization to be better suited for my type of study because it moves beyond the rigidity of triangulation to allow for a more multidimensional approach, one that provides a more complex understanding of the topic (Ellingson, 2009). This is achieved by using thick description, complex interpretation, more than one research method, and reflexivity (Tennley & Butey, 2009). In addition, feminist methodologists adopt crystallization because it complements the empirical with the subjective, and considers truth as socially constructed, hence, following the same epistemological and ontological principles as the CCM. This multi genre approach, Ellingson (2009) contends, requires a deep ethical commitment from the researcher, since crystallization “involves bringing together multiple contrasting, even conflicting ways of knowing in order to make knowledge claims and problematize those same claims” (p. 30).
Data validation was further enhanced by the dialogic and participative nature of the data collection process among the research team, which allowed for ongoing member checking during the data collection and analysis process.
Ethical Considerations

Working with marginalized populations means that the researcher needs to be extra sensitive to ethical considerations. In this case, not only am I working with youth, considered a vulnerable population, but they are also the children of deported parents living in an unfamiliar environment in Mexico. This research had built-in procedures to help protect participants, such as the consent and assent forms, the de-identification of data, and the rigorous IRB approval process prior to data collection. As a native of Mexico, where this study is taking place, I have an understanding of cultural norms as an insider. I have ensured to follow cultural norms by, for example, making sure that family practices are not disrespected, and confirming that the Mexican legal age delineating children from adult is compatible with that of the U.S. Because I am a native of the country where this research is taking place, I have full command of the Spanish language, which allowed me to have a better communication with Spanish-speaking participants in order for them to freely ask questions or seek clarifications at any point during the research. Additionally, because Mexico has no IRB requirements, I enlisted the help of two expert researchers for things to consider while conducting research in a Mexican context. One was the provost of one of the most important research universities in Alamar; the other is the Chair of the Department of Political Science at my own institution. Both experts corroborated that the ethical considerations taken for this study were appropriate for conducting research in Mexico.

Due to the young age of my participants, I was attentive to their emotional stage, their preferred modes of communication, and most importantly, I respected their choice in level of participation, especially when addressing the sensitive topic of deportation. Finally, I protected
their privacy and identity to the best of my ability, and paid extra care to ensure that no harm, physical or emotional, resulted from their involvement in my study.

**Limitations**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, time and resources were my greatest limitations. The scope of my research topic cannot possibly be covered in one semester of data collection and one semester of data analysis and interpretation in just one city. This should be a longitudinal study and a concerted effort between higher education institutions and government agencies on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. To add to the challenge, I had to bring this research to an end in order to finish my doctoral program on time. In addition, my resources as a doctoral student were scarce. Except for a small research scholarship earned at my institution, I was responsible for covering the expenses incurred as a result of conducting this research at a different geographical location from where I reside. The fact that I did not reside in the city where I conducted the research, meant that access to locations to conduct my data gathering was limited. In this regard, GAAM’s support in providing me a space to conduct the focus groups was invaluable. Moreover, there were unexpected factors over which researchers have no control that placed restrictions on this study. For example, multiple IRB approvals for international research, and limited involvement of my participants in the research design due to their daily obligations and lack of familiarity with research processes. Last, in this discussion I deliberately chose not to mention the researcher’s inherent biases as a limitation, because as I have argued, these should not be viewed as limitations, but rather, as research tools.

**Chapter 3 Summary**

Chapter 3 delineated my methodological approach, including my worldview and role in the research. I provided an overview of the Critical Communicative Methodology and its main
tenets. I also provided a rationale for all my decisions throughout the chapter. Last, I listed the
detailed execution of my research design and included data gathering instruments in the form of
appendices. I concluded with an analysis of ethical considerations and the limitations that
restricted the findings of this project. Chapter 4 will discuss my findings, followed by the
implications of this study in Chapter 5.
“The U.S.-Mexican border ‘es una herida abierta’ [it’s an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.”

Gloria Anzaldúa (2007, p. 25)

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to this research. Chapter 2 reviewed the current literature in order to identify the gap this research intends to cover. Chapter 3 delineated the methodology, including a detailed account of the research design and execution. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. This chapter is divided in three parts: first, I introduce my participants situating them within their family context using a portraiture approach. Next, I present the findings organized according to research questions from the perspectives of transnational students, mothers, and GAAM representative. I end with a discussion on the validation of the data and my concluding thoughts.

Family Portraits

In order to gain a better understanding of the findings, I introduce my transnational student participants within their family contexts, as the conditions under which families returned to Mexico highly influenced their experiences. I used a portraiture approach (Lawrence-Lightfood, 2008) to present a rich texture of the wholeness of the families, while retaining the individuality of each participant. As Sauer (2012) contends, this approach seeks to understand, rather than objectify, the actors of a study by detailing segments of their interviews and testimonios through first order (participant’s quotes) and second order (researcher’s interpretations) narratives. I decided to include the families’ stories because they highly influenced their children’s worldview. I also wanted to provide a richer context for my findings, which correlate directly to these stories.
“It’s a Struggle”

Mariana\(^2\) and her two children were the first family to arrive to my hotel lobby in Alamar for an interview. Mariana is a 33-year-old mother of two children, Nick (16), and Grecia (9). The three are here to tell me about their story of migration to Mexico. As I greet them, elated because they have agreed to give me their time on a Saturday morning to interview them, I take them to the hotel’s business center for privacy. We go through the consent process and I ask who wants to go first. Mariana volunteers, and her children are given the option to leave the room and get some snacks, or stay with mom. Both children choose to stay. Grecia listens attentively to our conversation while Nick grabs his headphones and apparently tunes out.

Mariana chose to interview in English. She shared that her parents took her to the U.S. when she was 3 years old. She was born in Mexico City but she has no memories of Mexico. Her parents migrated to the U.S. to escape domestic violence perpetrated by Mariana’s grandfather while they lived as an extended family in Mexico, and also in search of a better economic future. Mariana grew up in California, and then moved to Seattle at 19 where she got married and started a family. She, along with her husband and parents, sought legalization for years. They obtained a temporary working permit, however, they were denied legalization. Mariana shared:

“[...] But the last time that I went there one of the judges asked me how my son was and he was around, I think he was five or six and he told me, actually it was a she, I remember really well, she told me, “you know, your son is really young, he’ll be able to adapt moving to Mexico,” and she kept on going about other stuff and said “you know what, I deny your residency here in the States and you have to leave the States within…” and they gave me an exact date that I had to move out.

\(^2\) All names of people and places are pseudonyms.
Mariana, her husband, and parents were able to remain in the U.S. a couple more years despite their deportation order. A short time after, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) came for her parents. Mariana avoided being taken away because she and her husband lived with her brother-in-law at the time, however, after witnessing how a neighbor was taken away by ICE, Mariana and her husband decided to return to Mexico under less traumatic circumstances. Mariana remembers:

I just thought, I was just afraid of Nick [her son] since he was the oldest and he didn’t want to come, he wanted to stay over there, but I explained to him that it would be for just a few years, you know, while things cool off and maybe, you know, something would have come up through the future that we would be able to go back.

Mariana’s trauma and sense of loss became evident as she was retelling her deportation story. During our interview, Grecia, who was sitting next to her mom, sobbed quietly while her mom told her story. This is when I decided to include younger children in my study, because they were well aware of the impact of deportation in their lives. Several times I asked the moms if they wanted to stop the interview but they refused, almost as if they wanted to make the most of a platform they are very seldom offered to tell their stories. Mariana continued:

It’s just hard to say to somebody “just leave, you’ll be able to live good over there” [sobs] when in reality the only thing that, I mean for me my home is the States, I did kinder, elementary, middle, high school, I even went to community college over there, and this is something that nobody would understand unless you get taken away from your home and thrown somewhere that you’re not part of, and to be by yourself also, and try to stay strong for your family, for your kids, it’s the worst. [Crying].

In Mexico, the hardest part for Mariana has been overcoming financial hardship. She is a
stay-at-home mom as one of her kids goes to school in the morning and the other in the evening. Her husband works odd jobs that don’t pay well. During our interview, Mariana kept repeating what I believe captures her present situation: “It’s a struggle… [a] constant struggle.”

Mariana’s oldest son agreed to interview next. Nick is a 16-year-old boy who attends the second semester of preparatory school, equivalent to 10th grade, and loves to play football. When I asked about his life in the U.S. he said that he remembered being like any other child. He added: “apart from, like, economic struggles that we had, […] I liked living over there [in the U.S.]. Interestingly, even though he is well aware of the deportation story of his parents, when I asked what were the reasons for his move to Mexico he replied: “’Cause my uncle offered my dad a better job over here [in Mexico], and the majority of my dad’s family was over here, so we decided to move over here.” It was surprising to me that Nick did not mention deportation as the direct cause of his return to Mexico.

Grecia, the youngest of the family, was not interviewed at my first meeting with the family because I did not have IRB approval for her yet. A few months later, with proper IRB authorization, I conducted my interview with Grecia (9), who attends the 4th grade at a public elementary school. She loves to play with her dog, Candy, and to watch TV. About life in the U.S., she remembers going to preschool, dressing up for Halloween, and going to Disneyland once. About life in Mexico she added: “I like it but things are very different here. I would feel better if I were over there [in the U.S.].” When I asked why she had come to Mexico, Grecia candidly responded: “Well, I really don’t know. I don’t know much about what happened but I think it’s because something was wrong with my mom’s last name and she got deported.” This matter-of-factly response surprised me, especially because her brother Nick, who is older, did not mention deportation as his reason for moving to Mexico. I must admit that, by the time of my
interview with Grecia, I had known the family for six months and this could have influenced her frankness. Nick and Grecia’s answers to the rest of the interview are shared in the findings.

“Pretty Messed Up”

The second family, Elsa, Paloma, Hans, and Peter, showed up that same Saturday in the afternoon. As with my first family, we proceeded to the hotel’s business center and took care of the consent process. Shortly after, we began our interviews. Once again, Elsa, the mom, volunteered to go first, but this time her children chose to leave the room to get snacks.

Elsa chose to interview in Spanish, and although we had only met a few minutes earlier, she straightforwardly shared her story of deportation. Elsa, a 35-year-old mother of four, was born in Alamar, but migrated north with the father of her then two children when she was only 19. Elsa admits that, at the time, she did not really consider any structural, financial, or other oppressive factors for her decision to move to the U.S. because she and her husband were very young. She knew, however, that her two small children would have a better opportunity in the U.S. She had two children born in Mexico, and two others that were born in the U.S.

It took me by surprise how eager moms were to share their stories, giving me the impression once again that this was an opportunity they did not have often. Elsa began her story with the separation from her husband, and how she had to work extremely long hours as a housekeeper and waitress just to make ends meet. Because she would leave home before dawn and would come back at night, her oldest son had to babysit his three siblings, fixing breakfast, getting them ready, and getting themselves to and from school. To save money, they rented a room in a house where the five of them would stay, and lately, when things started to get better, they lived in a trailer in Vista County, California. Working 12-16 hours a day took a toll on Elsa’s health, and with no insurance, no other financial support, and no other means, she did
what she felt had to be done. Elsa described:

It’s embarrassing because there are decisions we sometimes make that hurt, but as I told you before, if I had to do it again, I would do it. For my children, I have done everything in my power and if I had to do it all over again, I would. [I had friends who] didn’t just work as waitresses, but they also sold drugs and they asked me to help them with that and I told them no, […] and they started to explain to me, they started to encourage me, and one thing lead to another, then I agreed to work with them; the first times I worked with them everything seemed so easy, I thought to myself “well, what do they do?” They just went and delivered some stuff, I mean, I never saw what they delivered.

After a while Elsa realized this was not the path she wanted to take, but it was already too late. An informant had given Elsa’s name to the authorities and, one December morning, after she dropped off her children at school, she was detained. She described:

And when I get out of the car I look back and I see a fleet of police cars, FBI, with guns. […] They did not let me speak, they threw me to the floor, they handcuffed me, and [told me] that I did not have the right to speak until I had an attorney, and they did not let me get my belongings, they took away my cell phone, they took away my purse, and they destroyed the car. […] My mom [came], and she gets there and she finds my house destroyed, she begins to cry, the children begin to cry, the children were also scared because they didn’t know what was going on with me.

Then, Elsa described the trauma her children underwent, saying:

My mom tells me that my oldest son wasn’t able to sleep. When they knew where I was, my mom tells me that he woke up at night and he banged all the walls [participant starts weeping heavily]. Paloma began to cut her hands, the two youngest, Hans and Peter,
cried a lot, they’d say that they wanted to see me, that they missed their home.

After being in a detention center for over two months, Elsa described how a judge decided her fate, adding:

The judge was really hard on me, he asked me if I was sure of what I was doing, that he knew I had children, but that I should not think that my children were going to legalize me, that the fact that I was acting so “prepotente” [Spanish word for arrogant] he was going to deport me for life, and so he did, he deported me for life.

From all my participant families, Elsa’s was the most dramatic case. She was the reason I decided to include family contexts before introducing the findings, because they add a layer of complexity to the children’s experiences. After what she went through, the legend that describes her WhatsApp status is not surprising. It reads: “Nuestra suerte en sus manos de mierda” [Our fate in their shitty hands]. After her deportation, Elsa brought her three youngest children to Mexico. Her oldest son decided to stay behind in the U.S. Needless to say, Paloma, Hans, and Peter were very affected. One of the biggest obstacles Elsa has had to overcome in Mexico is the prejudice and exclusion her children are subjected to for being U.S.-born. She shared that one of her son’s teachers had the audacity to tell her that Hans reminded him of a gang member, but he was not surprised because that’s all the U.S. produced.

As for the children, Paloma (16), my only Mexico-born transnational student, likes to listen to music and attends the 10th grade. When asked about her life in Mexico, she did not hesitate to state: “I don’t like Mexico at all!” Hans (12) likes to skateboard and attends the 7th grade. When I asked him to describe how life in the U.S. was, he uttered only three words: “Pretty messed up.” Finally, Peter (10) likes to watch cartoons in his free time and attends 5th grade. Describing how he felt when he learned he would be coming to Mexico, he said: “I didn’t
like the feel of it, ‘cause I knew that something was going to change.’ When asked their reason for moving to Mexico, the three children unequivocally identified the deportation of their mom as the main motive. From the three families, they were the most aware about deportation being the reason for their uprooting, this is not surprising given the traumatic circumstances of their arrival. The children’s answers to the rest of the interview are presented in the Findings section.

“Familia Muégano”

Similar to a peanut brittle, a muégano is a Mexican candy made up of peanuts bound together by caramel; hence, a “familia muégano” refers to a close-knit family in which all members are always together. That’s how my third family proudly presented themselves to me on a Saturday afternoon when they came to my Alamar hotel lobby for an interview. The family consists of Nadia, a 41-year-old mother of Paula (15), Adrián (14), James (11), and Carol (9). Nadia also has two grown daughters who are married and living in the U.S. Almost as if families were following a pattern, the mom volunteered to interview first after the consent process was over. An explanation could be that maybe moms wanted to know what the experience would be like for their children before giving their final approval.

Nadia asked to be interviewed in Spanish. She shared that she was also born in Alamar, and had grown up crossing the border frequently to attend school “on the other side.” Nadia’s case is uncommon, she is the daughter of an American citizen, but her father, whom she was not close to, never made an effort to claim her as an American citizen when she was a minor. Nadia grew up having a visa, which she used to go back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, until she got married and became pregnant. Not wanting to deny her children the American citizenship as it had been done to her, she decided to go to the U.S. to have her children. For ten years she kept her passport current, until one day it expired without her being able to renew it. Nadia and
her husband then hired a paralegal who, fraudulently, filed a petition for political asylum on their behalf. Nadia had no idea that Mexico did not qualify for political asylum, and because the petition they signed was a federal document, the government accused them of fraud. They were given a deportation order, which they did not follow immediately. However, one day, Nadia received news that her mother had suddenly died, and she left for Mexico immediately, not thinking about the long-term consequences. Desperately, Nadia tried to return to the U.S. using a fake passport, however, she was caught at the border. She was given a five-year penalty. Her children and husband did not come to Mexico until the school year was over, about six months later. Nadia described their situation:

My husband could not take care of them by himself because he had a full-time job, and my daughters worked too, they had their own lives and [my children] were all minors and they missed their mom very much. So my oldest daughter and I decided that the best thing would be to send them over here, because my children were…they were very affected by the fact that I has here [in Alamar]. They used to cry, the school psychologist called my daughters and my husband because there was a drastic change in behavior in them, they used to cry in school, and the school psychologists wanted to know what was going on, so my daughters told them that I was in Mexico. Then after six months we decided that it was better that the children came to Mexico.

For Nadia, the biggest obstacle in Mexico has been the lack of services available for her children, since they are not Mexican citizens, technically, until they receive their Clave Única de Registro de Población, or CURP, which is the equivalent to the American social security number, and which she cannot afford to obtain for her children due to the high costs of the procedure.
As for the children, Paula is a high-achieving student who is starting high school this year and is nervous about going to school in the evenings; Adrián plays traditional Mexican music and hopes to form a band with his friends. James started middle school this year and proudly describes himself as the best student in his class. Carol declared that she is an animal lover and is against animal cruelty. When I asked them why they had moved to Mexico, their answers fluctuated between speculation and family reasons. Carol, the youngest, innocently replied: “mom moved to Mexico and I came with her.” James speculated: “because her passport was expired, or something, I imagine. Or maybe she did something wrong.” The two oldest, Adrián and Paula, mentioned the death of their grandma as the reason for their return. When I asked their mom if the children knew about her undocumented status, or if deportation was discussed in the household, she said the children were well aware. Therefore, their reluctance to identify deportation as a direct cause for their relocation came as a surprise.

These are the circumstances under which transnational students made their arrival to Mexico. From their stories, we begin to see that their trauma began long before they were forced to come with their parents, and that deportation, acknowledged or not, added a layer of distress.

Alignment to Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter 3, data were gathered from March to October 2017. Data sources included 17 interviews, 3 testimonios, 5 focus groups (including artifacts produced), and 3 observations. MAXQDA software was used to catalog and code data using thematic analysis. Samples of my coding system and coded transcripts can be found in Appendices F and G. The data derived from the above sources and the subsequent analysis served to answer my research questions. An overview of the main findings is presented as a figure under each question; participants who appear in bold made a stronger emphasis on that topic, or were more deeply
affected by the issue. Connections to other sub-themes are also included.

**Educational Experiences**

To answer the first question of how the educational experiences of transnational youth are shaped by parental deportation, I used data from interviews, testimonios, focus groups, and observations. Findings are presented in Figure 11. You will notice in this chapter’s narratives that these findings are not clearly delineated, that related themes and sub-themes show up in more than one area, making the themes messy. This speaks to the muddled reality of transnational students in Mexico, whose plight is intensified by deportation.

**Figure 11. Overview of Findings for Research Question 1/Educational Experiences.**

**Different Teaching Practices:** “They Teach You When They Want To”

The number one obstacle to a smooth educational transition for transnational students,
according to parents and students, and corroborated by the GAAM coordinator, is the difference between the U.S. and Mexican educational systems. This has many ramifications, as not only students and parents considered Mexican teaching practices overall to be less effective than U.S. practices, but there were many other compounding factors that made the transition even more difficult.

Students experienced a cultural shock with teacher absenteeism, a teaching practice that is common in Mexico but that was unacceptable to them. Students were astounded by the habit among Mexican teachers to simply not show up for class without previous notice, to use class time for activities other than teaching–including checking social media in their phones, or explaining lessons only once without checking for understanding, leaving many students confused and without the possibility to go over the lesson again. For example, Paloma shared her frustration:

Yeah, I notice that the teachers here in Mexico sometimes they don’t go to your classes and you stay like an hour without that class, like if it’s math you stay an hour without learning anything in math. Yeah. They teach you when they want to.

Peter mentioned:

Because over here some teachers don’t work that hard, they say “put this on your notebook and close it up and now you can talk” and all that. In the Unites States the teacher wouldn’t get distracted by their phone.

Nick commented:

There’s some [teachers] that do teach well, but a lot of them are like the type that they don’t even explain, they just put something on the whiteboard and they’re just like “this is this and that’s that and if you don’t understand it go check it on the internet.” It’s like,
“well… you’re the teacher, you’re supposed to show us.”

Unfortunately, when students were vocal about their frustration and critiqued this deficient teaching practice, they were silenced by their teachers who reminded the students they had to get used to Mexican practices because they were no longer in the U.S., or by the principals who justified teachers by saying the teacher had full autonomy in their classroom and not even the principal could interfere. Like in Paula’s case, who, when asked what she could do to improve the situation said: “Well, I could [talk to the teacher] but nothing will change, they would still be not doing anything because the teacher, every year they say that he’s like that, that’s his style, not doing anything, just putting easy lessons.” This cold reception by school staff made students feel voiceless and in some cases, it undermined their sense of agency.

Insensitive teachers and teachers who viewed teaching simply as a job was another great difficulty identified by transnational students and their mothers as greatly hindering their adjustment to Mexican schools. Surprisingly, my co-researchers did not mention school failure when speaking about the insensitivity of teachers, but rather, the emotional toll it took on them, as not only were teachers insensitive to their needs, but they also held prejudiced perceptions about the children. For example, one teacher was openly prejudiced against Hans for his appearance. Elsa, his mother, remembered: “even the teacher says that Hans is one of the children that he sees as resembling a U.S. gang member, he said to me “because in the U.S. it’s the only thing that you see, gang members.” Teachers were also insensitive to the special needs of the student, but what persisted was the prejudiced attitude toward them. Hans experienced this attitude repeatedly, his mother described:

But his ADHD is what I have told all of them [teachers], is what he has when he, if you ask him something and he feels you’re going to embarrass him he would try to go off a
tangent, […] or if you ask him something he will answer something else because he’s playing, but nothing else. And they tell me “but here he’s not supposed to do that, you’re used to something else,” and always, I mean, always, they bring up the subject that because “él es del otro lado” [he’s from the other side, meaning, he was born in the U.S.]. I tell them, “and believe me, over there [in the U.S.] people are more accepting than here.”

Unfortunately, transnational children are not shown any empathy because, as Eva, the GAAM coordinator explained, “Alamar is so used to migration, and it has permeated Alamar’s social fabric to such extent that migration of transnational students does not cause an impact on these teachers who refuse to change their practices for them.” Eva made a critique of some teachers’ view of the teaching profession, adding that some teachers thought: “My job is to teach, my job is not to make sure that you are learning.” Therefore, Eva continued: “there needs to be a change not only in the teaching practices, but in the teacher’s mentality.”

Children were well aware of this issue. When my youth participants were asked if they considered Mexican teachers well prepared to teach them, Nick responded: “I don’t really think so ‘cause they teach for like just [Mexican] students, I don’t think they’re prepared for like, somebody from another country.”

Another obstacle identified by mothers and students was the lack of school services and resources in Mexican schools. Mothers and students experienced this lack of resources differently. For example, when comparing U.S. and Mexican schools, all participants agreed that there were better conditions and support in U.S. schools, but they differed in how they prioritized their needs. For example, moms mentioned the absence of free school lunches, free school transportation, and free school supplies in Mexican schools; students on the other hand,
mentioned the lack of after-school tutors and learning coaches.

**Dangerous Conditions and Violence in Mexico: “How Can We be Safe?”**

The second obstacle to a smooth educational experience identified by parents, but above all by children, was the unsafe conditions and a constant state of violence in Mexican cities. This is a serious problem because children expressed feeling unsafe not only in their city and neighborhood, but in their schools as well. In fact, safety issues were one of the most cited reasons why children missed being in the United States. They remembered their schools in the U.S. being safe spaces for them, and for all participant families – except Elsa’s, their U.S. neighborhoods also felt safer. Not surprisingly, safety and fear were some of the main causes for their trauma and emotional vulnerability, as well for a persistent state of cultural shock. When asked about life in Mexico, invariably all children talked about safety issues, especially at school. Adrián mentioned:

> At first it was really hard. Entering school, I saw that there were fights, my teacher would leave the classroom, in the U.S. we were never left alone in the classroom, and here they did, they left and [my classmates] would tell each other mean things, and that’s something I never witnessed over there [in the U.S.]. I had to get used to it.

Elsa’s children described how drug dealers entered their secondary school freely to offer drugs to students, and how children pushed and shoved each other at their elementary school. Paloma shared: “Schools here don’t try to keep the children safe. You see children here at the age of 10, 9, smoking marijuana, cigarettes, drinking, under age children drinking, doing drugs.” Children also described the violence in their city and neighborhoods, mentioning their inability to go outdoors for fear of being assaulted, kidnapped, or robbed. Although this was also of concern for parents, the concern was greater among children. Grecia, one of my youngest
participants shared:

I can’t go out by myself because there are a lot of people that do bad things, or sometimes they are not bad people but they do bad things, or sometimes people take you to dangerous places, or there are places where te maltratan [they abuse you].

Teenage participants were equally affected. In all our conversations, Paula spoke about living in a constant state of fear. Her latest scary moment came only weeks before our last meeting. She shared:

I still don’t feel safe because I think it was like two weeks ago, [my neighbor] started to be a drug addict and he set his own house on fire, and it was going to our house and we had to get out […] like, the police didn’t even came, like the firefighters came when my dad had already put out the fire. So it was like, “how can we be safe?”

Finally, Nick said he has to constantly check in with his mom just so she does not worry. His mom added: “it’s just scary here, you know? I mean, I know I worry a lot and I always tell him ‘please send me a message when you’re at school to make sure you got there.’”

This constant state of fear has forced some children to adapt to the situation by becoming street smart, which they identified as one of the positive things they’ve learned by living in Mexico.

Lack of Spanish Proficiency as Basis for Discrimination and Exclusion

The lack of Spanish proficiency was identified by all transnational students as their third biggest impediment not only to their schooling experiences, but to their social interactions as well. None of the children in the three families reported having a fluent level of Spanish to even initiate a conversation. For example, Hans remembered how, when he first arrived in Alamar three years ago, he was surprised to hear and read so much Spanish around him, he remembered:
“the streets were kind of different and the words were in Spanish, and back then I didn’t know how to write or talk in Spanish.” He also shared that making friends was challenging, adding: “first it was kind of fun because I met a lot of Spanish [Mexican] kids, but I wouldn’t understand so I always laughed, smiled, [and just] looked at them.”

Children soon realized what a disadvantage it was to not speak Spanish, especially when school started. Mothers identified the lack of Spanish as one of the greatest challenges for their children when they first attended school in Mexico. Elsa said: “they spoke very little Spanish, that was one of the very first things that affected them once they got here.” Nadia experienced something similar, she explained:

The first [obstacle] was the language, then, to accept that they are in a country they don’t know, the culture, it’s very different here, people are very different here, then there’s the school, they don’t understand Spanish, they speak it but they don’t understand it very well, so it was hard for them, although they never showed it “I feel bad here,” never. They would always try not to make me feel bad, they would always say “we’re here with you, mom, we used to miss you a lot, we’re better off here.”

Mariana’s daughter, Grecia, was severely harassed by her first-grade classmates for not speaking Spanish. This was such a traumatic experience for Grecia that she blocked out English completely and for several years she refused to speak it. Mariana shared:

When we got here I guess her brain was trying to, kind of translate it in Spanish and so on, and kids would make fun of her and she just blocked it out. I was always sent to a psychologist like, you know, from school, because they thought that something was probably wrong at home or something like that, but she just, she blocked it out until about a year ago, she thought it was cool because her friends would be like “oh, you speak
English and Spanish.” But before that she didn’t want to, she just wanted to speak Spanish only and, I mean till this point when, I think it kind of affected her to the point that she can’t really express herself.

Grecia’s case does not fit with the conventional narrative that younger children adapt more easily than older kids. In this case, her older brother Nick had a somewhat trouble-free transition into school because he was able to catch on to Spanish a lot faster than Grecia. There were several factors for the difference in experiences, among them, Nick had a supportive teacher who was patient with him and took the time to slow down for Nick; whereas in Grecia’s case, neither her teacher nor her classmates showed any support, but rather, made constant fun of her deficient Spanish.

The lack of Spanish language was also responsible for school failure during the first months of school in Mexico. Except for two of Nadia’s children, the rest of the children received bad grades during the first months of class. Eventually, they were able to bring their grades up as they learned more Spanish.

Unfortunately, in a nationalistic and monolingualistic country such as Mexico, and in a city where a nationalistic prejudice is deeply engrained in society such as Alamar, not speaking Spanish became a source of oppression for these children. First, most teachers showed a great degree of insensitivity toward them, refusing to offer any additional help or differentiated instruction. In some cases, students were even targeted by their teachers. Elsa experienced it with Hans. She explained:

[Hans’] teacher scolded him all the time, she did not allow him to go to recess because he did not finish the work they had him do, that was the first day of school. She knew the situation. She knew that he did not speak Spanish well, she was well aware that he did
not write absolutely any Spanish, that in order for him to write he would write letter-by-letter, letter-by-letter, and I would tell him “do what you can, m’ijo, I’m going to help you when you get here, I will help you, I will do this, I will do that,” then he would cry every day when he had to go to school.

Hans’ self-esteem was visibly damaged by this experience. It was obvious that he was cautious not to speak too much. Once he warmed up during our interactions I understood why. He shared:

[The teacher] would make fun of me ‘cause I don’t know Spanish, and he would be like “Oh, this is like that” and he laughed at me in front of everyone and embarrassed me… in front of everybody in class.

Language also became an identifier as an inauthentic Mexican that led to stereotypical remarks and social exclusion. I was able to witness this during an observation at a local university, where Eva, the GAAM coordinator, was giving a presentation in front of undergraduate psychology and pedagogy students. When she talked about the invisibility of transnational students in Mexico, because phenotypically they don’t look any different from Mexico-born children, she asked the audience how they would be able to recognize them. Immediately the audience responded: “When they start to speak, because they speak differently. They speak Spanglish.”

Finally, the fact that transnational students don’t speak Spanish tells only part of the problem. The reality is that in a classist society such as the Mexican, those who do not speak a “proper” Spanish will be at a disadvantage. In the case of transnational students, this added disadvantage resulted from their lack of academic Spanish. This has educational as well as cultural capital repercussions for students. Paloma shared:
When I first came here I was like, “Oh, I’m going to know everything” and then when I came to school I’m like, “I don’t even know what report card means.” I would just stand there, I was like “what does that mean?” and a friend would be like “Oh yeah, you go to the office” or something, I would go and I would say it and they gave me this paper and I was like “Oh, it’s a report card!”

Eva, the GAAM coordinator corroborated this disadvantage, saying:

It’s not the use of Spanish language per se, but the use of the *academic* Spanish language [emphasis placed by participant] in order for the student to understand what the teacher is saying. […] Then, the child needs, above all, a collection of words, of academic vocabulary that the child will need to face the challenges she/he will encounter.

I also learned that returning parents are equally affected. Nadia explained:

So, when I came back to Alamar I am finding out that my Spanish is very basic. Since I did not study here, I just went to elementary school here, I came to Alamar and I don’t have an education, so I can’t get a better job. So, in that sense I was affected.

**Loss of Basic Rights Due to Lack of Mexican Documentation**

By law, minors who are born abroad to Mexican parent(s) are considered Mexican citizens. Technically, however, in order to have access to basic rights, they must have their Clave Única de Registro de Población or CURP, which is the equivalent to a social security number.

Eva, the GAAM coordinator explained:

If the child gets to Mexico without proper documentation, the child will not obtain a CURP, which gives them access to public services, even though their parents are Mexican. They have the right, but they are still being foreigners as long as they don’t have their documentation.
In order to obtain their CURP, transnational children need documentation that in some cases they don’t have and/or that is timely and costly to acquire. Therefore, from my three participant families, none of the children had their CURP, and none of them had access to basic rights such as medical benefits, access to scholarships or government assistance, and most importantly, they would not have access to higher education in the future because they would need their CURP in order to graduate from high school. Therefore, the lack of Mexican documentation was identified as the fourth greatest impediment for the stability of transnational students by the GAAM coordinator, but more urgently, by the mothers.

Moms were particularly worried because the lack of citizenship had a severe impact on basic aspects of theirs and their children’s lives. From the mothers’ perspective, the fundamental well-being of their children was jeopardized as they were denied access to medical benefits; children were in danger of missing additional educational opportunities on top of the opportunities they lost in the U.S. when they moved to Mexico, as they were in danger of not being able to graduate high school or access higher education in Mexico without their CURP; but most importantly, this had an effect on the financial stability of the family, as not only moms had to pay for medical and school expenses out-of-pocket, but some mothers were in the process of obtaining their own Mexican birth certificates.

Mothers shared their experiences. Nadia said: “I work and I have medical insurance but my kids do not. Why? Because they are American citizens, I cannot add them to my insurance until I get them their Mexican nationality.” Mariana has not been able to get hers or her children’s, she shared: “Right now they don’t have the dual nationality because there’s some things that I need to fix for my birth certificate, so that means they don’t have the CURP.” This is doubly problematic for Mariana because her son cannot graduate from high school without it.
She explained: “right now in prepa [high school] they’re telling me ‘for us to be able to have him graduate he has to have a CURP or else he won’t graduate.’”

Elsa was the only mom that had issues with school enrollment, she explained:

They wanted me to get [my children] the dual citizenship so that they could be accepted here in school, but, since it’s a very high expense for me, I have not been able to do it.

Ironically, Mexican institutions decide to overlook the lack of Mexican documentation and are willing to consider transnational students as Mexican citizens in the wrong scenarios. For example, since the transnational student is Mexican, even without the proper documentation, it is easier for principals to report these students as Mexican nationals instead of filling out the required paperwork for them. This is because the principal has no incentive to do extra work if he or she perceives that the school or the students won’t receive any kind of support from GAAM or the educational system. In turn, this impacts GAAM’s ability to locate these children to offer support because GAAM relies on school records filled out by the principal when the transnational student enrolls directly in school. As we can see, this becomes a vicious cycle in which the only party affected is the transnational student.

In this study, lack of documentation did not pose a barrier to elementary and secondary school access, except for only one participant. Surprisingly, all families reported a lack of government support, particularly from GAAM, the institution in charge of assisting them. For example, two families had never heard of it, and one family said it did not provide any particular benefits for her or her children.

**Experiences from a Gendered Perspective**

To answer the second question of how the educational experiences of transnational youth differ due to gender, I used data from interviews and testimonios. When talking about gender,
youth co-researchers were able to identify gendered issues based on their experiences at school or in the streets. I left the questions very open ended for two reasons: to see what topics surfaced, and to be cautious of cultural norms, because I know some Mexican parents are very conservative when it comes to gender identity and sexuality issues. Remarkably, none of my participants talked about issues of gender identity, but rather, they gravitated toward gendered violence and gendered norms. Figure 12 shows an overview of findings.

![Figure 12. Overview of Findings for Research Question 2/Differences Due to Gender.](image)

**Female Disempowerment: “Este Es Un País Machista”**

The way females are disempowered in the Mexican culture, the daily street gendered violence they experience, and how they are forced into submission by sexist cultural norms were identified as the main concerns by mothers and children.
Regarding street violence, Paula seemed to be the most affected. In fact, she was my only female participant who recurrently would touch on this issue, as she experienced it every single day. Since she is a very soft-spoken person, she brought up the issue reluctantly at first, as evidenced by her response:

A lot of boys when a girl passes [...] like if a girl passes and they do something to her, no one else would say “why are you looking at her like that?” or “why do you say something like that?” You know? When boys are inappropriate with someone or with a girl.

When I asked her directly: Has that happened to you? She laughed nervously and said: “yeah, that has happened to me, but I try to ignore it.”

Adrián was very critical of this behavior, perhaps because, since Paula and Adrián walk to and from school together, he also gets to experience this harassment second-hand. He shared:

Boys here are very vulgar. Mostly the boys. When we’re walking down the street, me and my sister, they stare at her, something that did not happen over there [in the U.S.], or at least I never saw it. They are…they are more advanced [sexually], the boys, it’s like they like to do things they’re not supposed to.

Grecia, as young as she is, was also able to recognize this type of gendered violence, although she could not exactly name it. She said: “there are people that start telling you stuff, like, I don’t know how to say it, they start to talk to you and they start saying ugly things…”

In a disempowering culture, girls are permanently forced into submission through gendered cultural norms. Adrián offered examples of how girls are forced to be submissive:

A woman, like for example, my sister, if somebody says anything to her she cannot say anything back to the boy, because maybe he will get offended or something. In my case,
since I’m a boy, maybe I can say something, right? If I tell him to stop it, to not get off, to stop looking at her that way… because they stare at her private parts. I don’t like that.

Paula agreed, saying: “If they tell me something like, I’m afraid to tell them like, “why are you saying that?” ‘cause they could do something to me, or stuff like that.”

Adrián, in particular, was very critical of gendered violence, perhaps because he experienced a situation of violence against her sister. Adrián recounted:

They came to my classroom and told me that a boy had slapped my sister, so I went to ask him why did he hit her. And he said that’s how they roughhoused, and I told him that I did not know my sister to roughhouse.

Trying to defend Paula, Adrián got into a fight with this boy. The result was that both boys ended up being grounded for the fight. Nadia, their mom, acknowledged that, unfortunately, Mexican society is based on a disempowering culture toward women, adding: “girls are underestimated because boys are taught from an early age to undervalue women.”

In this study, sexism was also evident in the subtle but ingrained prejudiced attitude from male teachers toward their female students. In Paloma’s case, she was relentlessly harassed by a vice-principal in her secondary school, and, although her mom attributes this harassment to nationalistic prejudice, her accounts have tints of sexism. Elsa described the situation:

He would say “Paloma you’ve been through the office too many times, you took too long in the ladies’ room, what were you doing in there?” And they would walk her back to the ladies’ room to check what she was doing and what stall she had used. I mean, it was something that he was getting to a point of too much harassment and intruding in her life inside the school. I would think, “This is too much!” You know?
Nadia had an explanation for sexism: “Sí, porque desafortunadamente este es un país corrupto y machista.” [Yes, because unfortunately, this is a corrupt and misogynist country].

In conjunction, these stories speak of a gendered violence that is normalized in Mexican society but that poses real threats to girls every day, and that indirectly affects boys as well.

**Developing Critical Consciousness Through Dialogue**

To answer the third question of how does the use of dialogic process raise the critical consciousness of transnational students, I used data from interviews, testimonios, and focus groups. Special emphasis was placed on our focus groups sessions to answer this question, since they were designed to act as a strategy to co-construe our realities in order to enhance our critical consciousness. Figure 13 shows an overview of the findings.

![Figure 13. Overview of Findings for Research Question 3/Critical Consciousness.](image)
Based on Freire’s (2014) concept of critical consciousness, this question was intended to recognize in participants the level of in-depth understanding about their world, and the sociopolitical connections they made. Specifically, this question was intended to determine to what extent dialogue allowed participants to name their inequalities and reflect on them. Action toward liberation will be explored in the next section covering resistance modes.

**Social Critique as an Indicator of Oppression Awareness**

The first theme associated with critical consciousness was the articulation of a social critique as an indicator of oppression awareness. In our dialogic exchanges during data collection, participants critiqued Mexican and U.S. governments and the lack of support received from Mexican institutions. Additionally, they were critical of the Mexican education, expressing their desire to go to college in the U.S.

During our testimonio session Paloma mentioned at one point that she hated the government. When I asked if she was talking about the U.S. or Mexico she elaborated:

I’m honestly talking about both of them. Both of them! Mexico, I’m sorry for my language but Mexico is shit, honestly, the government is shit. They have policemen here arresting innocent people when really the real criminals are out there. [Police] stop you here when really, they don’t get paid enough and they take away your money. They say, “OK if you give me this much money I’ll let you go.”

Then she went on to critique the U.S. government as well, saying:

And over there in the U.S. they, some police officers are racist, just because they see you’re African American or Hispanic they would detain you without any reason. […] They’re just being racist. That’s why I don’t like the government at all! People say “Oh,
this government’s the best, if it weren’t’ for them we wouldn’t be here.” And I’m all, NO! [emphasis placed by participant].

Similarly, Hans shared his frustration with the U.S. government, saying:

The [U.S.] government for me, it’s like they’re making fun of us, technically, like we don’t know anything, when they say something they say it like if you don’t know about it, like if you don’t know your rights, or like if you don’t know what you have to do.

Another strong critique was directed to the lack of support from Mexican institutions. In this regard, Nadia, who from the beginning displayed a natural critical consciousness by making sociopolitical connections during our conversations, stated:

The system here in Mexico is very close-minded. I do get the support in the sense that they let [my children] attend school because it’s beneficial for the school because they get a certain amount of money for every student, but as far as them taking an interest in my children for being foreigners, no. […] For example, nobody has reached out to my children to tell them “you’re a foreigner but this is like your country, because your parents are Mexican” or… I don’t know, some kind of motivation, I mean, no. There is no program so far that I know of for U.S. citizens. Why? Because they have that mentality that “OK, if your mom or your dad left for the U.S. and they got deported, well, its’ too bad, you know?

When I asked if the GAAM program, whose objective is to support transnational students in Alamar, had reached out to her, Nadia was adamant in her response:

I have never received a notification or a flyer until now [referring to my study]. It would be nice but I understand that, because it’s Mexico, they’re not interested. If they don’t
care about the Mexican students, do you think they’re going to care about the U.S.-born students? No. Definitely not.

Last, parents and children in general critiqued the Mexican educational system, as they perceived U.S. academic practices to be superior and more effective than Mexican teaching practices. Without exception, participants expressed a preference for a U.S. education, particularly when it came to higher education. Except for Carol, my youngest co-researcher, all other youth participants saw themselves returning to the U.S. for college. Nick shared: “I would like to go back to study at least my last year of high school or university over there.” When I asked Adrián if he saw himself going to college, he responded: “Over there. Yes. Over there in the United States.” Answering that same question Paula said: “I want to finish all my studies. I think in high school I want to go study there in the U.S., like finish all my education over there so that I could get a head start to some college.” Having a U.S. college education seemed to be crucial for transnational students, perhaps because they viewed higher education as having a long-term impact on their lives.

**Heightened Awareness of Structural Inequalities as a Product of Guided Discussions**

Guided discussions refer to the flexible, yet channeled, nature of our conversations, revolving around deportation and its effects on the life and schooling of participants. The benefits of dialogue during data collection became almost immediately apparent. In this sense, the strategy of interviewing co-researchers individually or in pairs, then moving to more personal conversations during the testimonio sessions, and finally meeting collectively for the focus groups seemed to enrich the quality of data as our trust in each other increased. As a result, my co-researchers became more open, self-reflective, and detailed in their experiences.
Some participants showed a strong sense of critical awareness from the start. For example, Elsa and her children critiqued the institutional racism prevalent in the U.S. during our first meetings. When discussing life in the U.S. during our interview, Paloma described how she was discriminated for being Mexican, she remembered: “They’re also really racist over there in some schools. […] Those American folks, they could be really racist, even like parents, the parents would tell you things.” Elsa also shared her experience of racism with a U.S. judge in charge of her case, saying: “They’re really hard inside [jail], and more so being Latina, they treat us even worse, then the judge was really hard on me. […] Sometimes [judges] only look out for their own people.”

For others, the process of expressing a critical consciousness was more gradual. Having participated in the focus groups where we had discussions about privilege, power, and structural barriers gave them an opportunity to reflect. All the adults and youth that participated in the focus groups agreed that their biggest takeaway was the knowledge gained regarding structural oppression, for example, Mariana stated:

Sometimes one thinks that one knows things but we really don’t see them from a different way, for example, how you showed us in the activities, the pictures [about privilege and power], it was an additional knowledge. We think we know but we don’t, and it’s always a welcomed knowledge.

Nadia expressed something similar, she shared: “I have learned a lot of things, that sometimes it is not about us but it’s about the obstacles we encounter.” My children participants also gained a new perspective, James stated: “I liked the activities a lot, but I learned that you don’t have to be the biggest, or the most powerful to be a leader.” Similarly, Grecia added: “I
learned that no matter how little or big or smart you are, that we can all do something, […] that sometimes there are things that are not fair, but… that we can change them.”

The most remarkable example of the gradual display of critical consciousness happened during our discussion of power and privilege in our focus groups. For the first time, my youth participants were able to articulate their disadvantaged position compared to Mexican students by making connections to structural inequalities. They reflected on all the things they have to struggle with and that Mexican students do not have to worry about, like an unfamiliar culture, the lack of Spanish, and the trauma of deportation. Figure 14 captures the essence of our discussion.

Figure 14. Power and Privilege Focus Group Artifact.
Finally, when we touched on the topic of the current political climate in the U.S., I was surprised at how vocal my co-researchers were. When participants were given the opportunity to send a message to the current U.S. president, children were particularly critical of his policies and rhetoric. Even my youngest participants who were not very critical during our interviews, spoke out against U.S. anti-immigrant policies. Carol stated: “[I want] to tell the government for what is going on with Donald Trump, that he does not want Mexicans to cross the border: ¿eso es injusto? [That’s unfair].”

James agreed:

Well, [Trump] says that Mexicans are criminals, and I would like to say to him that we are not criminals, that my family is not criminal, that there may be others that are, but not us. [Carol interjects as her brother is speaking to adamantly say] “And we can prove it!”

[James continued] And to let us go back, that we are not bad people, we would not do anything wrong in his country.

Grecia mentioned: “I would be a little nervous but I still would tell him [Trump], that he does not have to deport people. Because there are people who are not bad people and they haven’t done anything wrong to be deported.” Peter was more direct. He said: “I don’t like [Trump]. I would rather choose another president.”

**Lack of Oppression Awareness**

Dialogic practices are not a panacea, and sometimes no matter how much one-on-one or collective dialogue occurs, the lack of oppression awareness persists. In this study, this lack of awareness was made evident when my co-researchers blamed themselves for their deportations or for currently living in Mexico; when they were unable to make sociopolitical connections to their lived experiences; or when they simply were unaware of structural inequalities. When asked
who or what was responsible for their situation as deported parents or children of deported parents, even my most critical co-researchers blamed themselves, suggesting that no connections to structural oppression were made when it comes to deportation. Paloma exemplifies this ambivalence saying:

I blame myself. I used to blame my mom, I’d tell her “it’s your fault that I’m here, it’s your fault that you got deported, it’s your fault!” […] In parts I think it’s my mom’s fault, because, well, because she started working in things she wasn’t supposed to. Me and my brothers, because we were so rebellious that we also got in trouble, and that’s why we’re all here, but in parts, it’s ‘cause… how can I explain it? It’s in parts that I think it is our fault but in certain times I think that it is none of our faults. I don’t know if you can understand it.

Paloma wasn’t able to make those connections to larger sociopolitical structures. She was able to do it for other aspects of her life, but not when it came to her mother’s deportation.

Another example was when participants were asked if they noticed any differential treatment for boys and girls in Mexico, my co-researchers were again unable to make connections to structural inequalities, such as sexism. Despite the fact that Paula denounced the gendered violence she experienced in the streets, she responded: “Well, no, I don’t feel any difference.” Similarly, Nick answered: “Well, I don’t really notice that much [difference]. Adrián represented an interesting example of lack of oppression awareness. On the one hand, he was critical of the gendered violence women and his sister in particular experienced, and that affected him indirectly. On the other hand, however, he was uncritical of other injustices. For Adrián, everything that happened to him was fair and his situation overall was good. In our focus group activities designed to explore issues of privilege and power, he was my only participant to
consistently think his situation was fair even when he was deliberately put in disadvantaged positions. The above examples speak to the internalized oppression minoritized groups experience, thus, normalizing structural inequalities.

**Resistance Modes**

For my fourth and final question on how do transnational students enact transformational and other types of resistance to obstacles in their educational experiences and more broadly, I used data from interviews, testimonios, focus groups, and observations. Whereas research question 3 was intended for participants to name their oppression, this question is intended to examine the actions participants take against oppression, or, to put in in Freire’s (2014) terms, how they work towards liberation. Figure 15 offers an overview of the findings for the fourth and final question.

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Empowerment

Participants displayed early signs of empowerment at the beginning of the study when, after sharing their stories of deportation and struggles in Mexico, they would talk to me about possible solutions. For example, Mariana offered ideas for how the U.S. government could support U.S.-born transnational students in Mexico. She suggested:

It would be ideal if [the U.S. government] don’t let us as parents go back [to the U.S.], but if they had something that they would say “we have a fund where a few kids can go once or every two months to the States, see their doctors, and their dentists to make sure they’re doing good, and then go back to their homes. I mean, that would be great!

These solutions were meant to meet their immediate needs, however, participants made no connections to structural inequalities or were motivated by social change.

During our focus group sessions, I started to notice a more purposeful sense of empowerment in my co-researchers. As they became more aware of structural barriers, they also started to display a greater sense of agency. For example, during our brainstorming activity in which we used the [Micro to Macro] Staircase exercise (Knox, n.d.) to identify solutions at the personal, local, national, and international levels, children and mothers came up with practical ideas to improve their situation, increasing participants’ sense of agency. Among the most popular action-driven solutions were: at the macro level, raising awareness about the situation of transnational students and deported parents before international organizations such as the United Nations, or other international organizations that would be interested in their plight; they mentioned the use of social media to accomplish this. At the meso level, they suggested petitioning to the State Education Department that teachers be more constant and supportive
toward transnational students, and organizing to form support groups specifically designed to meet the needs of transnational students. At the micro level, they recommended to know their rights to be better able to advocate for themselves, and also respecting and honoring the life experiences of others in their situation.

Mothers recognized that one of the most empowering factors for them had been the collective support derived from knowing there were other families in their situation. Before meeting each other, families felt a sense of isolation for not being able to share their stories for fear of being judged. During the focus groups, mothers felt liberated to speak freely. Nadia mentioned:

When we arrive in Mexico, we feel all alone, we feel that our neighbor did not go through what we went through, so now I’m happy to have met Mariana, to know there are more people like me, who have the same issues, maybe their issues are more severe or less severe, but to know she is here. And also, to find out that there may be support groups out there, that tells me that I need to incorporate myself to one of these groups and seek help for myself, because sometimes just a simple empathetic word, to hear “you are not alone, there’s more people like you” it’s really beneficial. Because with the people here [in Alamar] one cannot open up because we get judged, so we refrain from saying anything. So, I’m glad to know Mariana is here, I’m glad to know there are groups where we can go and talk about our issues freely.

The collective support and new knowledge experienced by my participants led to a renewed sense of hope for the future. Particularly for mothers who reported being excited about the possibility of engaging in projects similar to this study in the future. Nadia said: “There’s many projects to improve and there’s many good things to come. I’m really happy.”
Children, but mainly, their mothers, expressed having been empowered just by virtue of being able to tell their stories. During our interviews, mothers courageously shared their deportation stories and refused to stop despite being visibly emotional when recounting their traumatic experiences. Similarly, during our testimonio session, Paloma mentioned: “I thought no one was able to hear me, but thank God like, you’re here to hear me! And to tell my story!” This sense of acknowledgement and validation was also expressed by Nadia, who shared:

What I like and I’m really happy about, and I really don’t have words to express is that there was a person that came from so far away only to turn to acknowledge these children that are migrants and that are here.

The combination of the above factors led to what I termed *curación activa* or active healing. I derived this term partially from Anzaldúa’s definition of healing in her Coyolxauhqui imperative theory, which states that healing occurs when we “move through and beyond trauma and rage, transforming it into social justice work” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. xxiii). At the beginning of this study, co-researchers displayed what I call *curación pasiva*, or passive healing. The difference between the two consists on the desire of the person to work for change and social justice. Hence, during our first meetings participants shared their stories as a form of passive healing, whereas toward the end of the study participants expressed hope for the future and a desire for social change, therefore displaying a more active healing. I offer a thorough discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of these healing terms in Chapter 5.

**Push Back: Yo Resisto, Tú Resistes, Todos Resistimos**

All participants showed some type of resistance as evidenced in the narratives of the previous findings. In this section, I recapitulate how participants enacted their resistance.
Some of my co-researchers engaged in oppositional behavior, characterized by adversarial, defensive, or rebellious conduct. For example, Elsa’s defiant attitude during her verdict prompted the judge to deport her for life to “teach her a lesson,” she shared: “[Because] I was acting so prepotente [Spanish word for arrogant] … [the judge said] he was going to deport me for life, and so he did, he deported me for life.” In Hans’ case, he resisted by disengaging from the classroom and acting up, which got him in trouble at school. He mentioned: “Normally I would do whatever I want because the [teachers] would always make fun of me.” Unfortunately, because he has been exposed to gangs most of his life, Hans shows an obsession with their lifestyle. Although he critiqued them at times, he felt he could not escape them, he said: “Hanging out with gangs, I don’t like hanging out with them a lot, but I can’t do much because almost everyone I know or everywhere you go and try to meet, there’s gangs.”

Others resisted by being outspoken and socio-politically conscious. Paloma was one of the most outspoken students, especially about the lack of instruction in her school. She shared:

Actually, I tell my teachers, I’m like “what are you guys thinking about? What are you guys doing? ‘Cause we’re here, getting up early, coming to school, getting everything that you guys ask us, and, our parents, honestly, our parents waste all this money like on books, on notebooks, on pens, on everything you guys ask us for, and when we’re here, you just teach us what you guys want to. What’s happening?”

Nadia resisted by actively advocating for her children at school, although she also recognized that she was often silenced when demanding her rights. She acknowledged that teachers are not motivated to do their job because they are not paid, therefore, she thought the government was ultimately responsible for the teachers’ apathy.
Most of my participants resisted by being disciplined, resilient, and purposeful. For example, Paula, James, and Peter resisted by being disciplined, high-achieving students. For these children, academic success helped them to cope, adapt, and shield themselves from exclusion. James shared: “I’m very happy because I’m one of the most recognized students of all my school. I’m the most intelligent.” Nick had to keep up his grades in order to be part of the football team; he also shared that resiliency kept him going, he said: “I try to do the best with what I have, you know?” Paloma also showed great resiliency, she said: “you don’t always need a person to guide you, when you could honestly just guide yourself, but never lose hope. Even if you’re in the worst of times or in the best of times, never lose hope, ever.” Finally, Adrián kept out of trouble through music; and Grecia and Carol, the youngest participants, shared that they simply had gotten used to living in Mexico over time.

One of the most remarkable changes during this study happened with Mariana. During our first meeting, Mariana pleaded for someone to donate used clothes or money for her and others in her situation. During our last meeting, six months later, her request was quite different. She showed resistance by wanting to organize. She said: “I’m happy about certain projects that could be done, so that you can support us so we can get together because here one becomes more conscious about things, we can support each other, we can learn.”

Participants’ resistance was not clean-cut. They all lacked oppression awareness at times, and they all demonstrated agency at others, therefore, the above was only an overall assessment.

Coping Mechanisms

Family support was the greatest coping mechanism identified by participants. Family encouragement not only was pivotal in their emotional healing, but high parental involvement and advocacy made a positive impact in the transition of students to the Mexican educational
system. From my three families, Nadia was the most proactive at advocating for her children. She shared: “I would tell [the teacher] ‘please be patient with James, he understands Spanish but he cannot speak it. If you talk to him he’s going to understand you but he probably won’t be able to explain you.’” Nadia’s advocacy paid off. The principal of the elementary school her children attended remembered her perfectly because of her high involvement in the education of her children. In fact, the principal recognized her children as being “out of the norm” because, unlike other transnational students in his school, Nadia’s children excelled academically. The principal and teachers ask themselves what is it that makes this family so successful, what do they have that other transnational families lack.

Other coping mechanisms included coping through friendships formed in Mexico, especially with other transnational students, self-reflection to discern positive from negative behaviors, adapting to their new environment in Mexico, having a high self-esteem, being resilient, and being purposeful in their pursuit of an education. Because these coping mechanisms helped participants to adapt, rather than effect change, I consider them part of passive healing factors.

The final coping mechanism was identity code switching. Children either highlighted or suppressed their transnational identity in order to protect themselves from discrimination and exclusion. For example, Peter often got out of fights by telling his classmates that he was an American citizen who had taken boxing classes in the U.S. On the other hand, Nadia’s and Elsa’s children avoided speaking English in public to avoid being identified as foreigners. In some cases, transnational students used identity in creative ways. During one of my observations, the teacher mentioned the case of one of her transnational students (not participating in this study), who claimed he could not do schoolwork because of his lack of Spanish; however, this teacher
complained, his Spanish was good enough for social interactions. The creative ways in which students use their identity as transnational children to cope is an example of selective integration, in which the student chooses under which circumstances to integrate the school, social, or cultural environments.

All children without exception mentioned that, with time, they learned to be happy in Mexico. This closing statement by Paloma sums it up: “If I could change anything about my life, honestly I wouldn’t change anything, I’m happy with my life right now.” The findings of this study evidenced that mothers were the most emotionally affected by deportation and showed the least ability to adapt to their new environment.

**Exclusory Dimensions: Disempowerment and Prejudice**

The two most exclusory factors identified by participants were the disempowerment and prejudice they are subjected to in Mexico. Their sense of disempowerment was the result of several elements, like the trauma of deportation and uprooting, the in-group discrimination they experienced in Mexico, and the disenchantment of not feeling heard by adults who they perceived were in a position of power. Hans, who has experienced one of the greatest traumas in both, the U.S. and Mexico, made one of the most heartbreaking revelations that clearly described his sense of disempowerment. Once he was comfortable talking to me, we were discussing his future plans during his testimonio session, to which he replied: “Sometimes I tell myself ‘I’m not going to last that long’ so I’m going to try to, I don’t know why but, I just [have] that imagination. I’m not going to be that long here.” When I asked him to clarify what he meant by that, he seemed to have realized the gravity of his words and he offered a simpler explanation, saying “Honestly when I say I’m not going to last here long, I mean, sometimes I mean by life and sometimes I mean by Mexico.”
Mothers were the most affected by prejudice and in-group discrimination. In their condition as deported returnees to Mexico, they experienced a sense of displacement that prevented them from feeling part of their communities. Mothers yearned to go back to the U.S. and reported not feeling a sense of belonging despite having been born in Mexico. Nadia mentioned: “Many people are deported, and they’re embarrassed to say it, you know why? Because unfortunately here in Mexico we get judged!” [emphasis placed by participant]. For example, when parents advocate for their children, even if it’s only for basic rights, they get silenced. As Nadia explained:

When one dares to ask, they quickly, since we get labeled as coming from the U.S., they tell us “in the U.S. is different Miss, you’re in Mexico now” then we get silenced and don’t say anything, why? Because we know that they’re right, we’re in Mexico. Then we stop asking.

The result is that mothers soon learn that being critical and demanding their rights is counterproductive. They find that not only their rights are ignored, but also, they receive a backlash for demanding them. In addition, mothers are silenced because they are reminded that holding Mexico to the same expectations they had in the U.S. is unrealistic. They also encounter in-group discrimination when locals judge them for having chosen the U.S. over Mexico, something that is viewed as a betrayal to the very nationalistic social fabric of Alamar.

Transformative Dimensions: Transnational-Sensitive Teachers

The transformative factor with the greatest impact for a smooth transition to Mexican schools, according to transnational students and their mothers, was the help and support they received from teachers who were sensitive to the needs of transnational students. These transnational-sensitive teachers had distinctive characteristics: some had border-crossing
experience by having attended school in the U.S. at some point, they spoke at least some English, some had family members in the U.S., and in some cases, their own children were U.S.-born as well. These transnational dispositions provided them with a cultural sensitivity that Mexican teachers with no transnational educational experiences did not have. Mariana shared:

We’ve been very blessed that they’ve gone through teachers that have been able to understand. Some of them go back and forth [between Mexico and the U.S.] and kind of put themselves in my kids’ shoes and say, “you know what, I’ll help them out as much as I can, I know it’s hard.”

Paula also had a good experience when she first arrived in Mexico, she said:

When I went to 6th grade there was a helper of the teacher and she talked English so she used to sit by me and explain everything the teacher said, she used to tell me in English and it was really helpful.

Nadia, in particular, had the best experience with a transnational-sensitive teacher, saying: “The teacher was a very nice person, she understood [our situation] and my son [James] in three months was able to speak perfect Spanish. During the course of the study I learned that this teacher had taught James for four straight years, that she studied in the U.S., spoke English, and had U.S.-born children, therefore, transnationalism was something personal for her.

Unfortunately, having border-crossing experience did not warrantee sensitivity. Elsa had a bad experience with one of Paloma’s teachers who had also studied in the U.S. at some point; however, in Elsa’s case, the teacher used his border-crossing experience to belittle Paloma, accusing her of not trying hard enough. When I asked Elsa if she thought the male teacher was being sexist, she replied that she thought this was not a gender issue, but rather an issue of nationalistic prejudice because Paloma came from the U.S.
Unexpected Findings

The Trump Effect

One of the unexpected findings of this study was to learn that the anti-immigrant policies promulgated by the Trump administration had actually benefitted transnational students in Mexico. Eva, the GAAM coordinator, explained: “Trump threatened to deport 3 to 4 million Mexicans from the U.S., and the Mexican government reacted by creating programs aimed at absorbing these anticipated 3 million return migrants.” During the course of this study, the following two very important developments took place.

**Barriers to education removed.**

In response to an expected increase of deportees under the Trump administration, in March 2017 the Mexican Government approved the *Acuerdo número 02/04/17* (SEGOB, 2017), as a modification to the *Acuerdo 286* that establishes the guidelines and criteria for the validation of education acquired abroad (SEP, 2017a). Under this modification, the government removed all barriers to education by lifting the requirement of any documentation during the enrollment process for transnational students (SEP, 2017b). Eva shared:

> We received an announcement that was delivered at the federal and national levels here in Mexico establishing that, requiring any type of documentation that prevents any incoming U.S. migrant student of any educational level from enrolling in the Mexican educational system, is strictly prohibited.

What this means is that all schools in Mexico, by law, are required to enroll transnational children whether or not the family presents birth certificates or previous school records. In addition, children will be placed in their respective grade based on age, regardless of academic
performance. This is to prevent the common practice of placing the child in a lower grade due to a low or complete lack of Spanish proficiency.

Despite the benefits this decree represents for transnational students, there are challenges associated with its implementation. For example, during her statewide inspections, Eva is finding out that schools have not adopted this mandate consistently because there are no mechanisms in place to ensure its correct implementation. In addition, not requiring any type of documentation for school admission jeopardizes the database that GAAM has developed to track transnational students in the state. Eva explained:

In my personal opinion, we should have a registry, otherwise we would lose all the data that we have. I mean, this follow up that we have been able to accomplish from 2013 to date, in which we get a panoramic view of the data in terms of nationality, we get a panoramic view of data in terms of the number of students identified within this state, all of that can be at risk if we don’t give continuation to the data collection through a registry.

**Free dual citizenship.**

The other important development happened just weeks before data collection for this study was completed. In September 2017, Eva announced to my participating families that the state government had opened up a four-week window during which GAAM was going to process transnational students’ dual citizenship free of charge. She announced:

The state is starting a project to grant dual citizenship to 2,500 transnational students, this option consists in granting them the dual citizenship completely free, they will not be charged a dime, and this will allow you to have both nationalities [speaking to my participants].
Given the high cost of the procedure, and the lack of basic rights because transnational students are considered foreigners until they obtain their CURP, my co-researchers were thrilled with the news. Before this study concluded, Nadia, Elsa, and Mariana contacted me to share how happy they were to have been able to take advantage of this opportunity, as it had opened a world of possibilities for them, including access to medical benefits and scholarships for their children.

**The Effects of Globalization**

Globalization had positive and negative effects for transnational students in the context of this study. On the positive side, as discussed in the previous section, globalization forced the Mexican government to make amendments to its educational policy for the benefit on transnational students. My co-researchers were able to feel the positive impact of the new educational mandates almost immediately because, by virtue of Alamar being a border city, implementation was adopted more rapidly than in the rest of Mexico, although not without its flaws, as we saw earlier. On the negative side, also by virtue of Alamar being a border city, transnational students had to compete for scarce resources with other migrant groups. In addition, globalization has also blurred the nation-state boundaries, making it easier for people to engage in circular migration.

**International migrants.**

Globalization gives the distorted perception of a global community in which physical borders seem to disappear. There is a worldwide movement of people crossing borders with or without documentation in the condition of migrants and/or refugees. This effect is particularly strong in Alamar, a transient city due to its proximity to the U.S./Mexico border that is considered as a “last stop” for migrants before crossing to the U.S. In the past, international
migrants in Alamar used to come mainly from Central and South America. Presently, migrants come from locations as far away as Asia. During the course of this study, in particular, there was an influx of Caribbean refugees who were temporarily in Alamar awaiting free passage into the U.S. as refugees. Unfortunately, negotiations failed and most of these refugees refused to return to their country of origin, opting to make Alamar their permanent home. This put a burden on Alamar’s already strained social resources, as schools had to make room to absorb this group. Surprisingly, during my observations at the GAAM presentation before undergraduate students, there was more empathy expressed toward the Caribbean immigrants than toward deported returnees, arguing that the first group was stuck in Mexico for no fault of their own. This unexpected influx created a situation in which transnational students had to compete for government resources and assistance that was already scarce.

**Domestic migrants.**

Alamar also has a large influx of national migration from southern Mexico that move to this border city in search for a better opportunity. These national migrants do not seek to cross to the U.S., but rather, to establish themselves in Alamar permanently. Many of them come from indigenous communities who speak their indigenous language and that are not fluent in Spanish. Some children from these indigenous communities in Alamar have never received a formal education because they did not have schools available in their rural villages. During my observations, the school principal I spoke to put this issue in perspective as he explained how this affects transnational students. According to this principal, he had a group of students that first, was not fluent in Spanish, and second, was below the required academic standard for their grade level. However, implementing a course of action was almost impossible because their contexts were completely different. For one group, the teachers in his school would have to have
some proficiency of the indigenous languages of the domestic migrant students; for the second group, teachers would have to know some English to be able to help U.S.-born students. To complicate matters, two different learning strategies would have to be devised for domestic migrants who have never been schooled, and for international migrants who were schooled under a different educational system.

**Changing circular migration.**

Contrary to the literature that posits that transnational students report their desire to return to the U.S. as adults (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008; 2009; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b), in this study Mariana’s, Elsa’s and Nadia’s children reported that, rather than moving to the U.S. permanently as adults, they will engage in circular migration by working in the U.S. but visiting their parents in Mexico often. Nick expressed: “What I have planned to do is live over there but I also maybe want to buy a house here so I can go back and forth.” Similarly, Peter said: “I’m going to live in the U.S. ‘cause I was born there. But I will send my mom money and visit her often.”

Nadia’s children went as far as saying that they would not mind living permanently in Mexico just to be with their parents. Paula shared:

We were talking about it my brothers and I when my mom and my dad weren’t home, we were saying what if we change the house and what if we could put another floor and we could rent it and we could live in the U.S. and stuff, or what if we fix it and we live here. All of us.

Towards the end of the study, Mariana’s children reported seeing themselves living in either the U.S. or in Canada. This is because, after Mariana’s parents were deported, they moved to Canada and currently reside there. Mariana shared that her plans for the future are to move to Canada with her husband and children to be reunited with her parents.
When we consider our findings as a whole, especially that most teachers are unwilling to change their teaching practices, insisting on treating all students equally; that Alamar has become desensitized to migration, thus showing little empathy for immigrants; and that deportation adds a layer of stigma and exclusion to migrants’ experiences, we begin to grasp the complexity of the reality surrounding transnational students in Mexico.

**Evidence of Quality**

Following the parameters to establish rigor in the critical communicative methodology, this study used the crystallization of data through a multi method approach, which allowed for a more holistic interpretation the data. Rigor also depends on the replicability of the study. In this regard, I included a detailed description of the research design and incorporated data gathering instruments and coding systems in the appendices. Most importantly, quality is based on the impact of the study on social transformation. In this case, the networks built through this research project among transnational students, deported mothers, and the GAAM office, allowed participants to have first-hand information about government resources that they took advantage of. Finally, the continuous member-checking during data collection added to the trustworthiness of the study. Based on the above criteria, this research project can be deemed rigorous.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The experiences of transnational students presented in this chapter uncovered the difficulties of navigating two very different school systems with all its implications, including the added stigma of deportation. Findings also highlighted the benefits of transnational sensitive teachers with border-crossing experience. In addition, female students reported experiencing gendered violence in a society that forces them into submission. This study found that engaging in egalitarian dialogic practices not only enhanced the quality of data collected, but also helped
some participants to gain an increased awareness of structural inequalities, and to feel accompanied in their journey. Most co-researchers displayed resilient and transformational modes of resistance in the way they coped with, and thrived in, their new environment. Finally, the unexpected finding of the positive effects of an anti-immigrant U.S. policy, which forced the Mexican government to design strategies that benefitted transnational students in general, and my co-researchers in particular. Lastly, the pushing and pulling effect of international and domestic migration in Alamar, caused transnational students to compete for already scarce resources. The findings of this study speak of a complex and changing landscape for transnational students in Mexico.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of this study. Chapter 5 will offer and interpretation of the findings, including connections to the literature and theoretical framework.
No transformation is possible without searching for possibilities. Every individual— and every researcher—is responsible to dream, so that they can leave this world a little bit better for the coming generations.”

Jesus “Pato” Gómez (2011)

Chapter 5: Implications

Chapter 1 introduced the problem and laid down the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature and established the research gap. Chapter 3 detailed the methodology, research design, and implementation. Chapter 4 presented the findings. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings, making connections to the literature and the theoretical framework.

Previous literature on transnational students in Mexico has not isolated the effects of deportation on transnational children (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to document the effects of parental deportation on the educational experiences of transnational students in Mexico in order to recognize their obstacles and support mechanisms, to understand how their experiences differ due to gender, and to identify their critical awareness and resistance modes. This study used critical communicative methodology, which favors egalitarian dialogic interactions between the researcher and participants, and thematic analysis, which identifies patterns across the dataset to answer the research questions. This research also used a multidimensional theoretical framework that included transnational feminism, dialogic feminism, and Coyolxauhqui imperative to analyze the experiences of transnational students from global, institutional, and personal perspectives. The research questions and list of findings are presented as a summary in Figure 16.

Discussion of Findings Relative to the Literature

To recapitulate, findings according to research questions are summarized in Figure 15.
For this section, I decided to take my theoretical framework, discussed in Chapter 1, and to insert the findings of this study in place of the vague concept of transnationalism. I realized that many of the “push down” factors were structural, so I decided to frame them as top-down approaches to symbolize the way systems of oppression work. Similarly, I decided to frame “push up” factors as a bottom-up approach to symbolize a *transnationalism from below*.
(Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2006; Zúñiga, 2008). Figure 17 offers a conceptualization of my discussion.

**Figure 17. Conceptualization of Findings Relative to Literature and Theoretical Framework.**

- **Push Down Factors:** Structural Inequalities

  I found that the conditions that most negatively affect the experiences of transnational students are structural inequalities that exert pressure from the top down. These conditions have a compounding effect on the obstacles identified by my co-researchers, namely, unsupportive educational practices that exacerbate the difference in teaching practices, dangerous conditions in which violence in the communities and schools is prevalent, Spanish proficiency issues that
exclude and further marginalize transnational students, a sexist culture that systematically disempowers women and exposes them to daily gendered street violence, and internalized oppression that normalizes inequality and leads to a lack of oppression awareness. Whereas Chapter 4 presented the findings according to research question, in this section I divide the findings into three sections: deportation, education, and sociocultural elements.

**The effects of deportation.**

In this study, family context, including the circumstances under which parents were deported, served to either shield or heighten the children’s reality of deportation. The more stable the family environment and the less dramatic the deportation circumstances, the more children disregarded deportation as a cause for their arrival to Mexico. I base my argument on the comparative analysis of the three families. Mariana’s children had the choice to disclose the deportation of their parents or not, in part because the deportation seemed to have a more traumatic effect for Mariana than for her children—who were young when the deportation of their parents happened, and also because the circumstances were not as dramatic as Elsa’s. A juxtaposition of Elsa’s and Nadia’s cases offer the clearest example. Elsa’s family instability in the U.S. worsened the trauma of deportation for her children. The fact that structural inequalities beyond Elsa’s control pushed her to engage in unlawful activities in order to provide for her children, did not prevent them from being stigmatized for her incarceration and subsequent deportation, making it impossible for them to deny the reality of deportation. Elsa also experienced family dissolution as her oldest son opted to stay in the U.S. while the rest of the family moved to Mexico, causing a sense of loss in the rest of the children. After losing their brother and moving to Mexico due to Elsa’s deportation, the children processed their trauma in the form of rage and rebellious behaviors, which had detrimental effects in school, causing
Paloma and Hans to be targeted by their teachers. In contrast, Nadia’s children were described by their elementary school principal as “out of the norm” compared to other transnational students in his school. According to the principal, Nadia’s children had their needs covered beyond basic standards, meaning they had a little more than the typical student in the school. There was also high parental involvement, Nadia actively advocated for her children, and they in turn were high achieving, well-adapted students. Remarkably, none of Nadia’s children mentioned deportation in their story of arrival to Mexico. I also observed that James, Nadia’s youngest son, seemed to be confused about legal status. In his message to the U.S. president, he pleaded: “Let us go back, we are not bad people, we would not do anything wrong in [your] country.” This talks about the blurred lines of James’ understanding about who has the right to return legally to the U.S. In James’ plead “let us go back,” he does not only talk about his parents, but also about himself.

Contrary to the literature that posits that transnational students report their desire to return to the U.S. as adults (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2008; 2009; Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b), in this study Mariana’s, Elsa’s, and Nadia’s children reported that they will engage in circular migration by working in the U.S. but visiting their parents in Mexico often. In the context of this study, this suggests that the deportation of their parents poses an impediment to moving to the U.S. entirely, and forces children to keep permanent ties with Mexico. In addition, findings also suggest that deported migrants are expanding their options beyond the U.S. and are now considering transferring to Canada, which offers more possibilities for Mexicans not only because it is perceived as a more immigrant-friendly country, but also because recently Canada removed their visa requirements for Mexican nationals.

The social and emotional trauma experienced by participants has been evident throughout this study. For children, it started with their uprooting from the U.S. when they learned they were
moving to Mexico against their will, and it continued after they arrived in Mexico with their unfamiliarity with the Mexican culture, the difference in teaching practices, and the exclusion they were subjected to from locals because their use of Spanglish and their lack of Spanish proficiency. However, all youth participants reported getting used to their new environment with time, and learning to navigate an unfamiliar culture. On the other hand, trauma for mothers was represented by the circumstances of their deportations. Upon arrival in Mexico, their trauma stemmed from the financial hardships they endured, the lack of support from schools, the stigma of being deported, and from the judgement in their communities for being considered “traitors” for choosing the U.S. over Mexico, and the in-group discrimination they and their children experienced for being considered “inauthentic Mexicans.” The findings of this study revealed that the social and emotional trauma was greater for parents, since none of the three participating mothers reported being adjusted to their new environments. On the contrary, they reported having lost the sense of belonging despite having born in Mexico.

The reviewed literature that covers the effects of deportation on children focused exclusively on children of deported parents who live in the U.S. (Capps et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012a; 2012b). Surprisingly, I found that, once children move to Mexico, some of the negative effects decreased for them but persisted for their parents. For example, emotional distress and fears about family instability decreased for children while remaining the same for parents. Long and short-term effects shifted; for example, the inability of U.S.-born children to live in the U.S. changed from long to short term, since participants will be able to return to the U.S. as adults. In contrast, economic instability changed from short term to long term in the Mexican context. The emotional distress of family separation disappeared completely in the Mexican context. Some effects remained the same; for example, misunderstandings of immigration persisted while in
Mexico; however, while children denied their immigrant heritage in the U.S., they denied their American identity in Mexico. Finally, family dissolution remained unchanged, although in this study only Elsa experienced it. Figure 18 shows a deportation pyramid developed by Dreby (2012b), and an adaptation to the pyramid based on the findings of this study, showing the differences of the effects of deportation once children move with their parents to Mexico.

Figure 18. Adaptation of Dreby's (2012b) Deportation Pyramid to the Mexican Context.
Educational issues.

Educationally, this study found that co-researchers identified the difference in educational systems as the greatest barrier to a smooth transition into Mexico. Consistent with the literature, this study confirmed that over a decade later, schools in Mexico continue to be unsupportive by remaining highly nationalistic and monilingualic (Zúñiga, Hamann, & Sánchez García, 2008), that transnational students continue to be invisible (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2008), that teachers continue to hold deficit perspectives about them (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a), and continue to show little desire to modify teaching practices (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a), rendering schools and teachers ill-prepared to meet the needs of transnational students. Under these circumstances, transnational students and their families continue to view U.S. schools and education as superior (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2008; Sánchez García, Hamann & Zúñiga, 2012). That the school scenario for transnational students continues to be unchanged in the above areas cannot be attributed completely to unsupportive schools or unprepared teachers, but referring to my top-down argument, it responds to larger institutional barriers in the form of a lack of political will.

This study also confirmed that Spanish proficiency issues continue to be one of the biggest obstacles for transnational students in Mexico (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2006; Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2008; Sierra & López, 2013; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2006). However, my findings revealed that it is not just the lack of Spanish in general, but the limited fluency in *academic* Spanish in particular what is at the root of the problem. This constituted another top-bottom approach because the lack of academic Spanish led to institutional, economic, and cultural exclusion. Institutionally, transnational students were
excluded for their inability to understand the teacher’s instructions or school material at school. This study found that the lack of academic Spanish not only affects students, but their parents as well. This had economic consequences for their parents, who were not able to get better paying jobs, sinking the family in a long-lasting financial struggle. Finally, the lack of academic Spanish also decreased the cultural capital of students and parents in this study, who live in a classist Mexican society, and in a city like Alamar, with a high degree of nationalistic prejudice and anti-immigrant sentiments (Rocha & Oceguera, 2013) that holds prejudiced views against those who do not speak “proper” Spanish, or those who speak Spanglish.

Teacher absenteeism and insensitivity also had a negative impact for transnational students. Although teacher insensitivity has been fully documented (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a; 2011b; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009), what the current literature failed to capture were the harmful effects of insensitive teachers on the student. Interestingly, my co-researchers did not include school failure as a direct effect of this insensitivity, but rather, the emotional devastation it produced. For example, Hans reported that his teachers constantly targeted him for his lack of Spanish fluency, and denigrated him for his gang-style appearance. Teachers consistently acted unconcerned for his ADHD, grounding him constantly and ridiculing him in front of the entire class, causing Hans to disengage from classroom discussions. As a result, Hans experienced what Patricia Williams (1987) calls spirit-murder, defined as a “disregard for others who qualitatively depend on our regard” (p. 151). Spirit-murder is so devastating because it is centered on hate and fear, that Williams goes as far as saying “I see spirit-murder as no less than the equivalent of body murder” (Williams, 1987, p. 151). When we connect Hans’ experiences in the U.S. and Mexico to the notion of spirit-murder, it is no surprise how badly affected he has been emotionally to the point of expressing: “I’m not going to last that long.” The helplessness in
Hans’ words reminded me of Kozol’s (1967) *Death at an Early Age*, in which Kozol describes the harmful effects of teachers’ insensibility on an already fragile child who has been failed by the State and the educational system. If Kozol wrote his piece in 1967, and 50 years later we are still having the same conversations, it is time to face the fact that the State and the educational system continue to systematically fail our children, and that as educators, we start taking responsibility for not murdering any more children’s spirits.

*Socioeconomic and cultural elements.*

The city of Alamar, like many other cities in Mexico, is plagued with drug violence. Therefore, it was explicable that co-researchers identified dangerous conditions and violence as a big concern. Remarkably, the literature reviewed in this study did not include violence in the reality of transnational students in Mexico. For this study, however, unsafe conditions and violence in the neighborhoods and schools was of great concern to students, because it affected them in their daily lives. While some participants said they felt safe in their school, others reported that local drug dealers had free access to their school premises without any kind of repercussions. The lack of safety had ramifications at the emotional level, since participants reported living in a constant state of fear. Unsafe conditions are also connected to a violation of the basic right of my participants to safety. Although Mexico warrantees the right of children to live a life free of violence in their Law for the Protection of Children’s and Adolescents’ Rights (Ley Para la Protección, n.d.), this is merely a formality, since it lacks implementation policies or sanctions. Unfortunately, my co-researchers reported a deplorable public safety in which they could not count on public services like police or firefighters in cases of emergency, which magnified their sense of vulnerability. Here again, we see an institutional neglect pushing down on the well-being of transnational students and their families.
This study sought to understand how the experiences of transnational students differed due to gender. The literature review identified an absence of analysis of transnational students based on gender. For example, Hamann & Zúñiga (2011b) used gender as a unit of analysis but only as a predictor of a Mexican identity rather than a hyphenated Mexican-American one. However, their discussion on gender was brief and rather unsubstantial, hence this study’s interest in the gendered difference of experiences. In this regard, female disempowerment and gendered violence were the greatest issues identified particularly by my youth co-researchers. Gendered violence was recognized not only among girls, but among boys as well, especially if boys had witnessed it happen to loved ones. Yet, none of my participants were able to recognize it as a structural inequality, but rather, they understood it as a cultural norm, helping to perpetuate its prevalence. This constituted a clear sign of internalized oppression. Once again, the basic rights of my youth participants to a life free of violence and to non-discrimination on the basis of gender (Ley Para la Protección, n.d.), were violated. Female disempowerment was evident in the female participants’ reluctance to call out violence for fear of retaliation. Paula, who was physically attacked by a boy at her school, learned to cope by simply ignoring violent behaviors against her. For Paula and other female transnational students in this study, the most prevalent form of daily gendered violence came in the common practice of catcalling. Female disempowerment and gendered violence constitute a form of structural violence in a patriarchal society that socializes boys from an early age to view women as being of lesser value. As a consequence, women’s lives are seen as disposable in a culture that systematically disempowers them. Sadly, Mexico holds one of the highest feminicide rates in Latin America, prompting the “Ni Una Más” [Not One More] campaign (Carmona, Caballero, & Rodríguez, 2010). Hence, it is not shocking that participants in this study reported being affected by gendered violence.
It used to be that in the early 2000s, lack of Mexican documentation was associated with a lack of access to basic education for transnational students (Ocampo, 2014). In this study, it is associated with a lack of basic social rights, including access to higher education. Lack of social rights for children in Mexico include: educational gaps, lack of access to medical services, lack of access to social security, lack of access to quality living quarters, and lack of access to food (CONEVAL, 2014). This is another scenario in which transnational students in Mexico are invisible, since studies that investigate the lack of social services in Mexican children do not include children of returnees. Therefore, the last educational barrier identified by co-researchers in this study, was the loss of basic rights due to lack of Mexican documentation. Remarkably, loss of basic rights when transnational students arrive in Mexico was another topic that was not considered in the literature reviewed. As explained in Chapter 4, in theory, transnational students are considered Mexican citizens by virtue of being the children of Mexican nationals. In reality, however, they must have a CURP in order to have access to basic rights and higher education. In this regard, mothers were the most concerned about the issue of their children not having a CURP since their children risked not having access to higher education because in Mexico, a CURP is mandatory in order to graduate from high school. The potential negative effects for transnational students would extend to their future financial stability since not having access to higher education would truncate their job prospects in the U.S. or Mexico. In addition, although social services for children are scarce in Mexico, by not having their CURP, none of my youth participants had access to medical benefits, financial assistance, or scholarships. In fact, the stark difference in welfare benefits between the U.S. and Mexico was one of the most cited reasons why mothers considered their children were in worse conditions in Mexico. Culturally, Mexicans do not expect their government to meet their needs, because every Mexican knows the State will
not come to save them; therefore, the Mexican idiosyncrasy is that they have to save themselves. In this study, Mexicans resented the fact that returnees make demands from the Mexican government that not even Mexicans who have never left the country demand. Therefore, my participants got silenced and soon learned not to expect help. That Mexicans see this lack of government commitment to the well-being of its citizens, and that they consider it normal, speaks of another form of internalized oppression.

**Push Up Factors: Transnationalism from Below**

In this study, the conditions that positively influenced transnational students and eased their transition into Mexico seemed to take a bottom-up approach, which reminded me of grassroots efforts initiated by vulnerable populations to improve their situation. For this reason, I decided to frame push up factors as a *transnationalism from below* approach, which “[reminds] us of the agency and active decision making engaged in the millions of families and individuals who cross (and often recross) international borders” (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2006, p. 259). These positive factors are: guided discussions that led to a heightened awareness of structural inequalities in my co-researchers, giving them the language to make social critiques, and providing them with new knowledge that led to a sense of empowerment, which in turn were conducive to action-driven solutions, which enhanced participants’ sense of agency. Participants also engaged in push back behaviors, which I classified using the resistance models by Delgado Bernal & Solórzano (2001), and Yosso (2000). The final two factors are not considered *transnationalism from below* per se, but they are included here because, although they are top-down approaches, they work for the benefit of transnational students, namely the removal of all barriers to education for transnational students, and the free granting of the dual citizenship to
transnational students. In this section, I divide the findings into three sections: critical consciousness raising, resistance modes, and positive unintended consequences.

**Critical consciousness-raising.**

This dissertation was conceived as an *oppositional consciousness* project, in which my participants and I would engage in dialogue to transform oppressive powers by becoming resistant and oppositional citizens-subjects ourselves (Sandoval, 2000). The basic premise of oppositional consciousness calls for individuals and groups to transform oppressive forces (Sandoval, 1991). Focus groups, in particular, were designed to adopt a Freirean model of critical consciousness-raising (Freire, 2014) in which participants would be encouraged to recognize power dynamics, to name the inequalities in their world, and to gain a sense of agency to want to work toward their own liberation. In this study, I framed my participants’ demonstrations of critical consciousness based on Chela Sandoval’s (1991; 2000) oppositional consciousness, Freire’s (2014) problem posing model, and Bell’s (2007) notion of social justice education, concerned with enabling people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization with oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities they are a part” (p. 2).

Table 6 offers an informal assessment of the critical consciousness expressed by participants based on connections made to larger sociopolitical structures, critique of social, government, or educational systems, and awareness of oppressive structural factors in their experiences.
Table 6. Levels of Critical Consciousness as Articulated by Participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Consciousness Before Focus Groups</th>
<th>Critical Consciousness After Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Medium: Sociopolitical Connections</td>
<td>High-Medium: Sociopolitical Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-Low: Social Critique</td>
<td>Medium-Low: Social Critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-None: Unaware of Oppression</td>
<td>Low-None: Unaware of Oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>*Paloma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>*Elsa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>*Nick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>*Paula</td>
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<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Carol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grecia</td>
<td>Mariana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>*Hans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>Grecia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Adrián</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>James</td>
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<td>Adrián</td>
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</table>

*Did not participate in Focus Groups.

All my co-researchers who expressed their critique to U.S. anti-immigrant laws resulting in millions of deportations, engaged in oppositional consciousness by demanding “that their own humanity be legitimized” (Sandoval, 1991, p. 12). Participants mostly did this in their message to president Trump by asserting “we are not criminals.” Although to Sandoval this represents the most basic form of oppositional consciousness, it still challenges hegemonic power structures because the subordinated group demands equal recognition as the group in power.

In this study, some participants showed an innate ability to be critically conscious from the start, as in the case of Paloma and Nadia who, by Freire’s (2014) model, were able to recognize power inequalities and to name inequalities affecting them in their daily lives during our interviews; however, they did not express the agency to work toward liberation. Others developed their sense of critical consciousness progressively throughout the study. All my co-researchers who participated in the focus groups, regardless of their level of critical consciousness, reported having gained valuable knowledge regarding structural inequalities,
power, privilege, and agency. Such is the case of Mariana, Grecia, Adrián, and James, who, after the focus groups were able to recognize power dynamics and name their oppressive circumstances; however, Adrián, despite gaining new knowledge regarding inequalities, did not show a disposition to work toward social justice and liberation. Mariana, Grecia, and James, did. Mariana expressed her desire to organize to form a support group for deported mothers with U.S.-born children in Alamar, whereas Grecia learned that no matter how big or small someone is, there is always something that can be done to change unjust situations. Similarly, James learned that even those who are not perceived as powerful can be leaders. Nadia, who did not display clear signs of working toward liberation before the focus groups, came full circle by the end of this study, expressing her desire not only to form a group with Mariana and others, but also to go back to school, and to insert herself more actively in the community by looking for other support groups in the city. For those who did not participate in the focus group, I grounded my assessment of their level of critical consciousness based on their responses to interviews and testimonio sessions. For example, Elsa recognized power dynamics and systems of oppression in the U.S. and Mexico, but lacked the sense of agency to change oppression, and engaged in behaviors that further aggravated her oppressive situation, such as her involvement in selling drugs if only for a short period of time. She stated that she would do it again to provide for her children, displaying a sense of distorted agency in which she acknowledges being able to do something about her oppressive circumstances, even if it means further getting entrapped in a vicious cycle of oppression. Hans followed a similar pattern, expressing his agency by disengaging from class because he felt that no matter what he did, he would continue to get targeted by his teachers. Paula and Nick timidly recognized power dynamics and were able at times to name their oppression, although they either ignored it, or downplayed it, as in the case
of sexism, which Nick insisted he did not notice, and sexual violence, which Paula saw as a
cultural practice that she had to submit to. The youngest participants, Peter and Carol, seemed to
only have a strong opinion about immigration issues, but did not display a sense of critical
consciousness other than recognizing violence in their school in the case of Peter, and animal
cruelty in the streets in the case of Carol.

**Push Back: Resistance modes.**

I based my assessment of resistance modes on the theories of resistance that highlight that
individuals are not simply acted upon by institutions, but rather, that they struggle and negotiate
with institutions to create their own meanings (Giroux, 1983; Sólórzano & Delgado Bernal,
2001). For this section, I based my argument on Sólórzano and Delgado Bernal’s (2001)
resistance modes, but especially, on Yosso’s (2000) resilience resistance model.

Most of the literature on transnational students ignores their funds of knowledge (Zúñiga
& Hamann, 2009) and agency, portraying them from a deficit-based perspective (Pérez & López,
2013). Therefore, this study sought to highlight the ways in which participants resist, and by
doing so, enact agency. I draw from the seminal work of Daniel Sólórzano and Dolores Delgado
Bernal (2001) on resistance modes, situating my participants in one of the four quadrants,
reactionary behavior, self-defeating resistance, conformist resistance, and transformative
resistance. The position of my participants in their respective quadrants was based on my
assessment of their answers to interview questions, testimonio sessions, and participation in
focus groups. I decided to also use Yosso’s (2000) model of resilience resistance because I
found it more appropriate for my discussion of resistance in this study. Figure 19 offers a visual
representation, followed by a detailed discussion.
I concur with Yosso (2000) that people’s complex behaviors cannot be neatly categorized into boxes, like I did in the above figure. However, I also agree with her that doing so helps to move the conversation “beyond a discussion of generalized oppositional behaviors and toward an understanding of how personal, familial, and community experiences inform different types of resistance” (Yosso, 2000, pp. 155-156). Yosso developed the above graph based on Freire’s critical consciousness-raising principle, except that Yosso extended the concept to include magical consciousness, or the belief that inequality is due to fate, luck, or God; and Naïve consciousness, or the believe that inequality is caused by ourselves, our culture, or our
community; and critical consciousness, associating inequality to sociopolitical structures. Also, individuals can be not motivated, moderately motivated, or highly motivated by social justice.

Based on Yosso’s (2000) model, I concluded that Elsa and Hans displayed a self-defeating resistance because they are both highly critical of oppressive systems, however, they perpetuate the oppression by engaging in behaviors that do not work to advance social justice, but that prolong the oppression. In Elsa’s case, she resisted financial hardship in an effort to provide for her children, but she did so by engaging in drug dealing, which prompted her immediate deportation. Then, she reported being a victim of discrimination while in jail, critiquing the oppressive system, but she engaged in a power struggle with the judge in charge of her case that resulted in her being deported for life. Hans, too, recognized and critiqued the systems of oppression, however, he also resisted in ways that further aggravated his oppression. In Hans’ case, he chose role models in a negative way by focusing on a gang lifestyle and dress code that he learned from his older brother, Hans also actively disengaged from class participation because he thought that no matter what he did, teachers would continue to target him, further alienating his relationship with teachers. Unfortunately, Hans’ resistance was met by a close-minded attitude of school staff who were unable and unwilling to find a positive way to engage Hans, causing both sides to continually disaffect each other.

I placed Nadia and Paloma in a transformational resistance mode because both were highly critical of the systems of oppression, while at the same time were motivated toward social justice. Nadia actively advocated for her children, is seeking to organize with other mothers from this study, and has expressed her desire to go back to school so that she has the tools needed to navigate the Mexican setting by being better prepared. Paloma was outspoken whenever she encountered oppression, and although she was motivated to work for social justice by expressing
great pain when she saw the state of “her people” (referring to Mexicans) in the U.S. as well as in Mexico, Paloma was not as vocal expressing concrete steps she planed to take to work toward social justice. Mariana, Grecia, and James began in the conformist resistance quadrant by not challenging institutional oppressive practices in the beginning; however, by the end of this study, they were headed toward a transformational resistance. In Mariana’s case, she wants to organize, just like Nadia, and she wants to form a support group for deported parents with U.S.-born children. She also expressed that participating in this study had deepened her knowledge about power, privilege, and structural inequalities, becoming more critical in the process. Grecia expressed that after participating in the focus groups, she felt more adept at taking concrete steps to change her adverse situations, for example, by reporting disciplinary issues to a teacher, letting her principal know about the malfunction of school premises, or working toward keeping streets free of litter. She reported that she now knows something can always be done to improve her situation. James did not name any concrete steps to exercise agency, however, he became highly motivated after realizing that even those in vulnerable positions can effect change.

Finally, the rest of my participants displayed what Yosso (2000) names resilient resistance. Resilient resistance is located between the conformist and transformational quadrants because, according to Yosso (2000), students engage in behaviors that “leave the structures of domination intact, yet help the students survive and/or succeed” (p. 181). Participants in this quadrant used different practices to protect themselves from oppression, rather than to change it. In this study, Paula was a high-achieving student who had the recognition of her former schools, Peter and Carol were good students who were succeeding academically, while Nick resisted through sports, and Adrian resisted through music. In all their cases, they were able to
successfully survive and even succeed in their respective environments, but their coping mechanisms still left the systems of oppression unbroken.

**Positive unintended consequences.**

The anti-immigrant policies of the current U.S. administration have forced the Mexican government to drastically change their educational policies to respond to the possible deportation of more undocumented Mexicans. Ironically, thanks to these harsh policies, the greatest improvement registered in this study was in terms of school access. While accessing schools in Mexico due to lack of required documentation used to be one of the biggest impediments according to Sierra & Lopez (2013), that is not the case today. Under a modification to Acuerdo 286 (SEGOB, 2017), the Mexican government eliminated the requirement of any documentation for migrant students to enroll in schools in Mexico (SEP 2017a; 2017b), which means that schools must enroll transnational children whether or not parents provide documents that certify their identity or academic records (Vargas & Aguilar, 2017). Similarly, the practice of holding students one grade back because of language issues (Hamann, Zúñiga, & Sánchez García, 2008; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009; Zúñiga & Vivas Romero, 2014) has been eliminated and now schools are required to place children in their corresponding grade according to age regardless of their Spanish proficiency.

As this research project was coming to an end, another groundbreaking governmental action benefiting transnational students –and particularly my co-researchers, came into effect. The GAAM offices in Alamar announced to my participants that they would be granting dual citizenship to transnational students free of charge and with minimum requirements under the “Soy México” [I Am Mexico] campaign, which was launched on September 14th, 2017 by the State Educational Department and coordinated by GAAM. The objective of the “Soy Mexico”
campaign is to speed up access to social services for children of Mexican parents who were born abroad, as this agreement will allow for the acquisition of the CURP for the beneficiaries to have access to social rights including food, health, education, housing, and an adequate income (SEDESOL, 2017). For this study, the specific purpose was to benefit migrant students enrolled in the state’s public elementary schools with a Mexican birth father and/or mother. In Alamar, campaign officials are emphasizing that secondary school students should be considered first, since they are close to entering high school and need to obtain their CURP. As mentioned earlier, having a CURP is a requirement to graduate high school and to enter higher education.

Fortunately, all transnational youth participating in this study were able to take advantage of this opportunity. One of the main reasons why participants did not have a CURP, was because some of the mothers did not have a birth certificate and were in the process of obtaining one, while the most prevalent reason was the cost. Obtaining the dual citizenship has a cost of approximately $7,000 Mexican pesos, the equivalent to $390 USD per person. What this new policy means for my participants in terms of practical implications is that Nadia’s, Mariana’s, and Elsa’s children will have access to medical benefits; high-achieving students like Paula and James will have access to government scholarships; Paula and Nick will be able to graduate from high school and go on to college in Mexico; and the rest of my youth participants will have a smoother navigation of the educational system being considered as Mexican citizens, even if only on paper. On the downside, this campaign is only temporary, lasting from September to October of 2017, and with a cap of 2,500 spots, where in the city of Alamar alone there have been 33,000 migrant students identified (Y. A. López, personal communication, September 23, 2017). Therefore, a medium to long-term program should be established in order to benefit as many transnational students as possible.
Transformative Dimensions: The Importance of Transnational-Sensitive Teachers

In this study, participants identified a number of coping mechanisms, including family support, high parental involvement, and advocacy; friendships and extracurricular activities; identity strategies; and resilient behaviors that could be viewed as transformative dimensions for their positive impact on the students’ transition to Mexico. However, this study paid particular attention to the single most transformative dimension outside of my participants’ hands: having a transnational-sensitive teacher with border-crossing experience and some degree of English fluency.

Mariana recounted that having a transnational-sensitive teacher was the difference between Nick’s smooth transition to a Mexican school in 6th grade, and Grecia’s traumatic experience in 1st grade. Similarly, Nadia reported that James, who did not speak Spanish when they first came to Mexico, was able to maintain excellent grades upon entering school in Mexico thanks to a teacher who understood his needs, transitioned him slowly into Spanish, and taught him continually for four years. James corroborated this by stating that his best experience in Mexican schools stemmed from having a teacher who would speak English to him, who gradually taught him Spanish, and taught him from the 2nd to the 6th grade. Unfortunately, when I went to observe this teacher’s classroom, intrigued by my participants’ descriptions of this teacher’s dispositions, I found that she had moved to another elementary school. However, based on Nadia’s and James’ accounts, I concluded that this teacher showed some of the dispositions identified by Cline and Necochea (2006) necessary for effective education in the borderlands, namely, open-mindedness and flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and pluralistic language orientation. Wanting to know more about this teacher, I probed Nadia and James to tell me more about her. That’s how I found out she had studied in the U.S. for a while, thus, having border-
crossing experience; also, she had U.S.-born children herself, and she was fluent in English and Spanish. Having this background and dispositions allowed her to recognize and nurture transnational funds of knowledge (Dabach & Fones, 2016) present in James’ bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy. However, border-crossing experience was not an assurance for teachers to become transnational-sensitive. Elsa reported that one of Paloma’s teachers used his border-crossing experience as an example to tell Paloma that he knew what studying in another country was like, and that she was not trying hard enough. This means that there must be a multi-tiered approach to transnational teacher preparation that highlights the skills and dispositions teachers need, including being flexible, being passionate about border pedagogy, having bilingual skills, and being culturally sensitive, in addition to engaging in ongoing transnational teacher professional development (Cline & Necochea, 2006). Also, schools need to engage in forward thinking (Gándara & Callahan, 2014; Sánchez García, 2016) strategies, which refer to proactive steps taken to accommodate, value, and affirm the linguistic, social, and cultural needs of migrant students.

In this study, transnational-sensitive teachers were identified as the most influential factor for a smooth school transition of transnational students. In 2014, Zúñiga and Vivas Romero found that transnational children reported experiencing pain in moving from one school system to the other, and that their perceptions to be successful in school were influenced by teachers’ concern for their learning. This study has found that teachers who are sensitive to their needs and supportive in their transition can be the difference between school success and failure.
Connections to the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study included transnational feminism, dialogic feminism, and Coyolxauhqui imperative to analyze the experiences of transnational students from global, institutional, and personal perspectives.

Transnational feminism (Fernandes, 2013) is oriented toward the study of globalization and border-crossing phenomena; therefore, it allowed me to frame the effects of globalization in an educational context by pointing out how globalization is reframing education in Mexico to slowly address transnationalism. The clearest examples in this study were, first the “Trump effect,” which caused the Mexican government to respond to Trump’s threats to deport millions of undocumented migrants by removing all barriers to education for transnational students and to grant them free dual citizenship during a 30-day period; second, the globalization effect, which exposed the dialectics of national and international migrants in Alamar who compete with transnational students for scarce social services. And third, the fluctuating circular migration patterns which used to be associated with agricultural workers moving seasonally between the U.S. and Mexico, but that now are represented by transnational students maintaining permanent ties with Mexico due to the inability of their parents to enter the U.S.

Dialogic feminism (Puigvert, 2003), which aims to incorporate the voices and aspirations of women from different academic and cultural backgrounds, allowed me to frame the experiences of transnational students within school and community contexts by also incorporating the voices of the mothers, the GAAM coordinator, and my own interpretations. This led to a more multidimensional analysis of the findings, since my study paid special attention to not only how each group perceived the identified issues, but also how each were affected. It was through a dialogic feminist interpretation that I discovered that youth participants
were more deeply affected by gendered violence than adult participants; also, that the lack of academic Spanish proficiency not only affected the academic performance of transnational students, but also the ability of their mothers to get better-paying jobs, worsening their financial stability; and finally, how the lack of government support was experienced on both sides of the spectrum. For example, I learned that families critiqued the lack of support received from GAAM, while the GAAM coordinator described the organization’s struggles to keep afloat with a minimum budget, and a staff of three to meet the demands of 33,000 students. These are perspectives I would have not gained without incorporating all voices in my analysis.

**Coyolxauhqui Imperative: From Passive to Active Healing**

The Coyolxauhqui imperative (Anzaldúa, 2015), symbolizing the ongoing process of fragmentation and reconstruction, allowed me to recognize critical awareness, modes of resistance, and healing processes in my participants. To understand healing, we must first understand trauma, in particular, the trauma resulting from oppression. This study revealed the trauma transnational students experienced when they were uprooted from their U.S. homes, and the trauma of their parents who lost a sense of belonging in a Mexican society that excludes them. Their trauma also originated from internalized oppression experienced as a result of sexism, classism, and in-group discrimination for being considered inauthentic Mexicans. Anzaldúa (2015) used the Coyolxauhqui imperative to represent how inequalities and trauma can fragment our spirit, and how we can reconstruct it in a new way as we transform trauma into social justice work. In this study, I was able to observe how my co-researchers went through two types of healing, which I named *curación pasiva*, or passive healing and *curación activa*, or active healing. To theorize both concepts, I drew on bell hook’s (1995) connections of “political injustice with psychological pain” (p. 142), thus linking trauma to sociopolitical structures. Next,
to explain the difference between passive and active healing, I drew on Freire’s (2014) concept of praxis, which posits that “[critical] reflection leads to action” (p. 66), and on Anzaldúa’s (2015) concept of the healing process, which is achieved when we move “through and beyond trauma and rage, transforming it into social justice work” (p. xxiii). Finally, I drew on Ginwright’s (2010) concept of care, which establishes that “care is perhaps one of the most revolutionary antidotes to urban trauma because care ultimately facilitates the healing and a passion for social justice” (p. 94).

In this study, my co-researchers demonstrated passive healing at the beginning of the study when they stated that, just talking about their painful experiences during our interviews and testimonio sessions made them feel better. For example, when Paloma was sharing her grief for the dissolution of her family when her older brother stayed behind in the U.S., she shared: “I actually feel really comfortable telling you this ‘cause it feels like I’m actually letting it all out.”

Progressively, I started to observe how, as our relationship as a research team grew, and as my co-researchers’ critical consciousness started to increase, they started to transition into an active healing phase, characterized by their ability to name inequalities, reflect on them, and taking an active stance to change their situation. For example, Nadia shared that she often felt silenced, judged, and isolated for being a deported returnee, which caused her emotional pain. As we started to unpack the structural causes of her oppression, she started to gain a sense of empowerment by knowing she was not alone. Nadia expressed:

Having had to come here and having been forced to be here, I get very depressed, but then, when I met you, when I learned about your study, when I connected with Mariana, I realized there are other people just like me, and there’s people that had to come back to Mexico and I liked that because I’m not alone. I have learned a lot of things.
As a result, Nadia expressed her desire to be more involved in the community. Nadia even reported she is going back to school to get her high school equivalent diploma. Similarly, Mariana also wants to take proactive steps to organize and form a support group with the other families. Mariana shared:

And in the meantime, we can maybe [organize]. Through [this study] we were able to network with other families, so we can begin to get together and see each other more often, especially for the kids, I mean, if I’m an adult and I feel so out of place here, I can only imagine how they must feel.

Finally, feeling that somebody cared about them and their plight seemed to have had a positive impact toward their active healing process. Paloma expressed: “I thought no one was able to hear me but thank God, you’re here to hear me!” Similarly, Nadia stated:

That you chose this topic, the scenario of these migrant children, I think it’s really good. And trust me, I am grateful and I am very happy that one of us “una paisana” wants to help us and does not forget about these children that sometimes don’t have a voice, so you’ll be their voice over there [in the U.S.].

**Implications for Social Change**

The findings derived from this study provided one of the most comprehensive insights into the effects of deportation on transnational students in Mexico. The significance of this study stems from its exclusive focus on deportation as a unit of analysis, elucidating the compounding effect of parental deportation on the educational, social, economic, cultural, and emotional aspects of transnational children’s lives. The findings of this study are not intended to be generalizable, however, several conclusions can be drawn. This study confirmed that schools in Mexico continue to be unprepared to teach transnational students, however, this study also
uncovered the efforts of the Mexican government to gradually meet the needs of transnational students by facilitating their access to social services free of barriers including education, in response to Trump’s threats to potentially deport millions of undocumented migrants during his presidency.

This study advanced the knowledge base on transnationalism by extending our understanding of the current state of transnational students. For example, Dreby’s (2012b) findings of the burden of deportation on children who live in the U.S. were extended by describing how the burden lessens for students while becoming more acute for parents once they move to Mexico. Additionally, my findings elucidated the intersectional effects of oppression by uncovering how female students experience gendered violence, and how unsafe conditions add to the emotional distress of migrant students in Mexico, two factors that had been ignored from the literature until now. Gendered violence and unsafe conditions pose a serious risk to the emotional well-being of transnational students, as a constant state of fear can lead to anxiety and/or post-traumatic stress disorder. Participants in this study expressed a high degree of vulnerability, with negative repercussion to their emotional stability.

Forced by the unfolding of anti-immigrant policies in the U.S., Mexico has been taking steps to support transnational students by modifying its educational policies. Although highly unlikely in the current administration, the U.S. should follow Mexico’s lead and start to devise policies to absorb the influx of U.S.-born students who will be incorporated to the workforce in less than a decade. Therefore, the U.S. should form partnerships with Mexican educational institutions, since deficient teaching practices in Mexico will have a negative effect on transnational students’ ability to access higher education, or get a job in the U.S in the future. This evidences the imperative need for teachers, particularly in the border regions, to adopt a
transnational pedagogy in order to teach not only Mexican students in a monocultural nationalistic setting, but also transnational students who are forcing Mexico to acknowledge multiculturalism. Mexico can no longer remain indifferent to global forces that make migration a reality and a way of life.

Finally, another great contribution of this study was the advancement of the under-theorized field of social healing. This study examined how students used their translational identity as a resistance mechanism, and how dialogic practices led to an increased critical consciousness, which in turn resulted in the transformation of a passive healing into an active form of healing that sought individual and social transformation towards social justice.

These are only a few of the ways in which my findings informed educational policy, teacher preparation programs, and government organizations tasked with providing assistance to transnational students.

**Recommendations for Action**

The findings of this study have repercussion for U.S. and Mexican educational policy. Due to the current anti-immigration climate in the present U.S. administration, little can be expected. Mexico, however, can continue with the strategies devised so far, which include the lifting of all educational barriers so that migrant students can have access to education as free of bureaucracy as possible and the granting of the dual citizenship to a limited number of transnational students. These inclusive educational policies need to be sustained over a long-term period and need to be far-reaching. This can be accomplished by devising mechanisms to certify the proper implementation of the program to ensure its consistent adoption and implementation in schools. In this regard, these measures depend more on government will than on government budget. Additionally, the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) [Secretariat of Public
Education] must recognize that ignoring the effects of globalization and not incorporating a transnational element in its teacher preparation and teacher professional development programs is no longer feasible, at least in its northern border region. In this regard, the SEP could devise Alternative Route to Licensure (ARL) programs designed to attract the high number of Dreamers that are returning to Mexico and that already have a college education, a bicultural understanding, and English language skills.

The recommendation for higher education institutions on both sides of the border has to do with the preparation of a transnational teaching force, particularly along the border cities of the Mexico/U.S. border. As evidenced by the findings, the need for teachers on both sides of the border to adopt a transnational approach to their teacher education and professional development practices is imperative. Therefore, U.S. and Mexican universities should concern themselves with the development of a transnational teacher preparation particularly that initially begins in the U.S./Mexico border area, but that gradually expands to southern Mexico. This can be done with the help of a border pedagogy (Barrios, 2011; Cline and Necochea, 2006; Garza, 2007) defined as “a set of multifaceted, complex, and interactive factors; educational policies; curriculum; instructional practices; and a knowledge base that educators need to consider to increase the academic achievement of diverse students in the border region” (Cline, Reyes, & Necochea, 2005, p. 149). Border pedagogy is being promoted in universities near the U.S./Mexico border who recognize the benefit of preparing teachers on both sides to teach an increasing transnational student population in Mexico.

In regard to GAAM, the program needs to modify its practices to take a three-tiered approach that includes teachers and school leadership, parents, and transnational students. As corroborated by the findings of this study, the greatest impact for the smooth transition to the
Mexican education system for my participants was the support of a teacher with transnational sensitivity who had border-crossing experience and that had English fluency. For this reason, GAAM needs to offer transnational professional development for Mexican teachers and principals. This can be accomplished by strengthening the relationships GAAM already has with research universities in the U.S., and extend those networks to include more universities that have a curriculum that encompasses multicultural education, migrant education, border pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and/or social justice approaches. In addition, this study found that principals are not clear about the benefit GAAM offers to transnational students, therefore, GAAM needs to clearly establish its role, objectives, and benefits, specifying exactly the type of support programs that are available to students, including strategies, dates, and locations. GAAM also needs to offer support to transnational students with programs that go beyond the assimilationist agenda the program is currently taking, in which the objective is to support students emotionally and socially to adapt to their new school environment. GAAM needs to devise strategies that will benefit the students in real life, and that value the transnational funds of knowledge students possess. GAAM has already started taking proactive steps by granting dual citizenship to 2,500 students in Alamar; however, this needs to be a sustained effort considering there are close to 33,000 transnational students in the city. Finally, GAAM needs to support parents who, based on the findings of this study, proved to be the participants with the greatest sense of urgency to work for change. Despite GAAM’s publicity campaigns, participants in this study reported they had never heard of the program or did not feel they had benefitted from it. Therefore, GAAM needs to improve its promotional practices to have a greater presence among its target population in Alamar. One way to do that would be to establish partnerships
with civil society and non-government organizations in the city that work to support migrant populations.

I acknowledge that the GAAM program is severely understaffed and under-resourced. In regard to funding, the GAAM would benefit from grants from external sources. One way to approach this would be to start a grant-writing project with one of the universities GAAM has partnerships with. Regarding the issue of the lack of staff, GAAM can continue to offer internships not only at the Autonomous University of Alamar, as it currently does, but the internship partnership can extend to other research universities in the city.

**Recommendations for Further Studies**

This study was a comprehensive investigation of the current state of transnational students in Mexico impacted by deportation. Therefore, I offered a broad view of the phenomenon in which I opted for breadth over depth. As a result, there are several areas for further studies that warrant our attention. First, given that Mexico is not the only country of origin for deportees, the phenomenon of transnational students must extend beyond Mexican borders. In this regard, we need to expand our studies to other Latin American countries not only to learn the contextualized experiences of transnational students throughout Central and South America, but also to draw generalizations and share support strategies. Second, there is a need to investigate how GAAM offices throughout Mexico are providing support to transnational students and how effective they are in their efforts. In this regard, a comparative analysis of regional GAAM offices is imperative. This could result in a more coordinated network among them in which the program cannot only share resources but strategies. Third, given the positive effect of transnational sensitive teachers who have border-crossing experience and English language skills to facilitate the transition of transnational children to their new educational
system, the examination of a transnational teacher development and border pedagogy is of utmost importance. We do not really have clear parameters for what a transnational teacher preparation should look like; therefore, the responsibility of higher education institutions and teacher preparation programs on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border to answer this call is crucial. In additions, the skills, abilities, dispositions, and cultural competency of teachers that show a high degree of transnational sensitivity are also worth investigating.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, we saw that mothers were more deeply affected by the trauma of deportation; yet, they were the most vested in working for social change. Therefore, the study of the social trauma of deported parents, and the transformation of trauma into social healing among parents should be studied. In particular, we need to better understand parents’ journey from what I call passive healing to what I have termed active healing. The influence that parents can have as advocates of their children can improve the condition of transnational students in their new environments.

Reflection of My Experience with the Research Process

As stated in my positionality statement in Chapter 3, there is no such thing as value-free research. I acknowledge that my worldview, biases, and prejudices influenced this study. I argue, however, that it was precisely my worldview and biases that pushed me to look deeper into the meaning of my data and to contest my prejudices. Delgado Bernal’s (1998) notion of cultural intuition encouraged me to honor the knowledge I bring to this project as a woman of color. My cultural intuition allowed me to draw from my lived experiences as an immigrant and from my professional experiences as a multicultural education scholar, to rely on my knowledge of the academic literature in order to make relevant connections to my findings, and to use analytical
research processes to intimately connect with my data. In sum, my cultural intuition guided my collection and analysis of data as well as my interpretation of findings.

Partaking in this research study was exciting, painful, hopeful, and heartbreaking, all at the same time. I remember the feeling of hopelessness that invaded me after my first round of interviews concluded. That night I entered my hotel room thinking I would not be able to continue, as my co-researchers’ stories of deportation and struggles in Mexico seemed too much for me to handle. I felt a guilt that resembled survivor’s guilt. I asked myself: “What prevented me from being in the shoes of any of these women?” I knew part of the answer was that I enjoyed privileges that were denied to them, among others, legal documentation in the U.S. The question then became: “What can I do with this unearned privilege?” At the same time, I had to challenge my prejudices when, after a few inconsistencies in some of my co-researchers’ narratives, I began to doubt their veracity. Overwhelmed by the mixture of emotions, I reached out to my chair and mentor, who helped me to sort out my feelings, to keep clarity, and to stay focused on the purpose of the study.

Although the start was bumpy, all my doubts dissipated as my relationship with my co-researchers developed. My mixed feelings soon were overtaken by a great sense of responsibility toward the families that were counting on my study as a platform to tell their stories and alleviate some of the invisibility they experienced on a daily basis. The use of a methodology that advocates for non-hierarchical dialogue, and that forces the researcher to be mindful of power dynamics was instrumental to build trust among the research team, however, it did not do much to minimize the knowledge divide. Without the relationship building, we would not have been able to talk so intimately about deportation and struggle. In this study, my co-researchers condemned the dehumanization of deportees, vindicating themselves by asserting: “We are not
criminals.” As this research process drew to an end, I was left with a renewed commitment to social justice. My co-researchers’ stories humbled me, and their strength inspired me to continue in the further development of a transnational teacher preparation and professional development curriculum that uses a border pedagogy.

**Conclusion**

To honor the voices of my co-researchers, and to acknowledge them as active subjects of their own research, I include their concluding thoughts along with mine. They speak not only for themselves, but also on behalf of their children, and on behalf of many other families like them.

Concluding thoughts from Mariana. A message to the U.S. government:

You’re not only sending me, to live somewhere else. I can cope with that. But you’re sending my kids somewhere else where you don’t know the struggle that we go through. I just think you should look more into it, and see what it is before you go on and do that. I didn’t ask to go to the States, I was taken there by my parents to have a better life [...] so I had no choice between Mexico and the States. I just think you should give a second look at what you actually do instead of thinking that we’re going to cope easily because we were born over there. You should first see, and actually come to the places and see what it is that people struggle with. This is why it’s so great what this study is doing, to get everything out there for the government to see. It’s easy to judge. When you actually see it through somebody else’s eyes, at least you’d be able to understand.

Concluding thoughts from Paloma. A message to the U.S. government:

They also have to think “they’re families, we can’t separate the families” they have a family of their own and I think that they wouldn’t even last a day in our shoes, they wouldn’t, because they’re so used to having things their way, they think they have
everything perfect when really, they’re making everything worse. They’re separating families, they’re doing the worse things ever! I know what my mom did was wrong, but also, they have to know that there’s certain places and certain things that us Mexicans, as immigrants, can’t get real jobs, and if we get jobs they won’t pay enough to feed our own families, that’s what they have to think too.

Concluding thoughts from Nadia. A message to the researcher:

I liked the way [this study] tried to help us. Simply by turning to look at these children that are here for no fault of their own in a country that it’s not theirs. They did not decide to come here, which is their parent’s country. That there was a person that came from so far away only to acknowledge these children that are migrant and that are here, that speaks very highly of your study and about the government program that is going to help us with the dual citizenship for our children, and how you advocate for us, and your efforts not because you’re doing your dissertation, but, you’re going to talk about our cases [in the U.S.] and God willing maybe someone becomes interested not only about us, but about many other children.

This study has shown that deportation not only affected the educational, but also the social, cultural, financial, and emotional aspects in the life of transnational families. It is time to face the reality that globalization is forcing education to transcend borders. In a globalized, multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual world, we need to go beyond nationalistic, and monolingual approaches. As educators, we must reflect on the role that we play to support transnational students. I acknowledge that, while my dissertation study came to an end, this project is a work in progress. The knowledge production that resulted from our collective labor of love only begins to delineate future steps. Therefore, we need to continue building and
developing support structures for transnational students and their families, and teacher preparation and professional development for transnational teachers. We owe it to the children who participated in this study, and we owe it to all the children who are being displaced from their homes because of neoliberal practices. My co-researchers and I have something in common, day after day they navigate an uncertain future in a Mexican society, and by doing so, they build roads that were previously nonexistent. In my case, I don’t yet know what a transnational teacher preparation should look like; therefore, I, too, will have to build those foundations. In both cases, borrowing Horton and Freire’s (1990) words, we make the road by walking.

Caminante, son tus huellas

el camino y nada más;

Caminante, no hay camino,

se hace camino al andar.

Antonio Machado
Appendix A: Pre-Interview Protocol (English and Spanish)

Pre-Interview Protocol (English Version)

**Title:** Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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<th>Preferred Pseudonym:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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- Describe in detail the objective of the interview.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td>Grade:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>Nationality:</td>
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</table>

1. Tell me about yourself. Name, age, school, grade, favorite past time.
2. How was your life before you moved to Mexico?
3. Why did you move to Mexico?
4. How is your life now that you live in Mexico, is it different for boys than for girls?
5. What have been the consequences of your moving to Mexico?
6. How have you dealt with those consequences?
7. What was the best part about attending school in the U.S.?
8. What was the worst part about attending school in the U.S.?
9. What was the best part about attending school in Mexico?
10. What was the worst part about attending school in Mexico?
11. How has living in Mexico affected your schooling, both positively and/or negatively?
12. What have you done about it? How have you coped?
13. What type of support would you like to receive? From Whom?
14. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Thank your participant. Turn off recorder.
### Pre Interview Protocol (Spanish Version)

**Title:** Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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<thead>
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<th>Preferred Pseudonym:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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- Describe in detail the objective of the interview session.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

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<tr>
<th>Nombre:</th>
<th>Edad:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escuela:</td>
<td>Grado Escolar:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexo:</td>
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</table>

1. Háblame de tí. Tu nombre, edad, escuela, grado escolar, tu pasatiempo favorito.
2. ¿Cómo era tu vida antes de que te cambiaras a México?
3. ¿Por qué te viniste a vivir a México?
4. Cómo es tu vida ahora que vives en México, es diferente para los hombres que para las mujeres?
5. ¿Cuáles han sido las consecuencias de haberte venido a vivir a México?
6. ¿Cómo has lidiado (hecho frente, luchado) con esas consecuencias?
7. ¿Qué ha sido lo mejor de ir a la escuela en E.E.U.U?
8. ¿Qué ha sido lo peor de ir a la escuela en E.E.U.U?
9. ¿Qué ha sido lo mejor de ir a la escuela en México?
10. ¿Qué ha sido lo peor de ir a la escuela en México?
11. ¿Cómo ha afectado tu educación el vivir en México (tanto positiva como negativamente)?
12. ¿Qué has hecho al respecto? ¿Cómo te has adaptado?
13. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo te gustaría recibir, y de quién?
14. ¿Hay algo más de lo que quieras hablar?

Agradece a tus participantes. Apaga la grabadora.
Appendix B: Parent Interview Protocol (English and Spanish)

Parent Interview Protocol (English Version)
Adapted from Reta Rojas (2011)

**Title:** Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Education of Transnational Students in Mexico Is Shaped by Parental Deportation

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<th>Preferred Pseudonym:</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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- Describe the project, and tell the interviewee the purpose of the study.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child’s name:</td>
<td>School child attends:</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1. Why did you come back to Mexico?
   a. Why did you decide to bring your children to Mexico?
2. How has life changed for your children (socially, culturally, and/or economically) now that you live in Mexico?
3. How was the process to enroll your child in school?
   a. What documents were required?
   b. How long did it take to enroll your child in school?
4. What is your opinion of your child’s school in Mexico? Advantages or disadvantages?
5. Do you feel your children’s teachers are well prepared to teach them? Why or why not?
6. Do you feel you have a good communication with your children’s school [teachers/principal]? Why or why not?
7. Has any of your children had any difficulties with their teachers due to language issues or because they come from the U.S.? Please explain.
   a. How about with their classmates?
8. What have been some of the challenges, obstacles, or failures your child has experienced at school?
9. What type of support do you or your child receive from the school?
10. How efficient do you think GAAM is in serving the needs of transnational students?
11. What have been some of the successes or accomplishments your child has experienced at school?
12. Do you consider the process of adaptation to school has been easy or hard for your child? Why?
13. Do you have any recommendations to improve the support offered to transnational students?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say that I haven’t asked?

Thank your participant. Turn off recorder.
Parent Interview Protocol (Spanish Version)
Adapted from Reta Rojas (2011)

Title: Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Education of Transnational Students in Mexico Is Shaped by Parental Deportation

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<th>Preferred Pseudonym:</th>
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<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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- Describe the project, telling the interviewee the purpose of the study.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

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<tr>
<th>Nombre:</th>
<th>Edad:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nombre del Estudiante:</td>
<td>Escuela del Estudiante:</td>
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</table>

1. ¿Cuáles fueron los motivos por los que regresó a México?
   a. ¿Por qué decidió traer a sus hijos a México?
2. ¿Cómo ha cambiado la vida (social, cultural, y/o económicamente) para sus hijos ahora que viven en México?
3. ¿Cómo fue el proceso de incorporación de su hijo o hija a la escuela?
   a. ¿Qué documentos necesitó?
   b. ¿Cuánto tiempo tardó para poder matricular a su hijo o hija en la escuela?
4. ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre la escuela de su hija/o? ¿Ventajas? ¿Desventajas?
5. ¿Siente que las maestras o maestros están bien preparados para enseñar a su hija/o? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
6. ¿Siente que tiene una buena comunicación con la escuela de sus hijos (maestras o directores)? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
7. ¿Alguno/a de sus hijos/as ha tenido problemas con su maestro/a debido al idioma o porque viene de E.E.U.U.? Favor de explicar.
   a. ¿Y con sus compañeros de clase?
8. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las dificultades, obstáculos, o fracasos escolares que su hijo/a ha experimentado en la escuela?
9. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo ha recibido usted y/o su hija/o por parte de la escuela?
10. ¿Qué tan eficiente considera que es el programa GAAM para atender a estudiantes migrantes? ¿Por qué?
11. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los éxitos o logros escolares que su hijo/a ha experimentado en la escuela?
12. ¿Considera que el proceso de adaptación a la escuela ha sido fácil o difícil para su hijo/a? ¿Por qué?
13. ¿Tiene alguna recomendación para mejorar el apoyo a estudiantes migrantes?
14. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría decir y que no le haya preguntado todavía?

Agradece a tus participantes. Apaga la grabadora.
Appendix C: GAAM Coordinator Interview Protocol (English and Spanish)

GAAM Coordinator Interview Protocol (English Version)
Adapted from Reta Rojas (2011)

Title: Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexico Are Shaped by Parental Deportation

Time of Interview: Date:
Place: Interviewer:
Preferred Pseudonym:

• Describe the project, telling the interviewee the purpose of the study.
• Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
• Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

Name: Years at this position:
Age: Highest Schooling Completed:
Title:

1. What is the role of the Grupo de Apoyo a Alumnos Migrantes (GAAM)?
2. How do you identify your target population?
3. How many transnational students does GAAM serve each year?
4. What type of support does GAAM offer to transnational students and their families?
5. How does GAAM keep in contact with transnational students and their families?
6. What is the enrollment process for transnational students to attend school in Mexico?
   a. What if the transnational student lacks the required documentation?
   b. In this case, how long does the process take and who is involved?
7. How do schools determine the grade transnational students should be placed in?
8. What are the issues or needs that transnational students face when entering schools in Mexico?
   a. What are their successes?
   b. What are their failures?
9. Are teachers adequately prepared to teach transnational students? Why or Why not?
10. Do you consider that the program has been effective in supporting transnational students and their families? Why or Why not?

11. What have been the difficulties of the program to support transnational students and their families? Please Explain.

12. Any suggestions or recommendations on how to provide better support for transnational students and their families?

13. Is there anything else you would like to say that I have not asked you about?

Thank the participant. Turn off recorder.
GAAM Coordinator Interview Protocol (Spanish Version)
Adapted from Rojas (2011)

**Title:** Reverse Migration: The Effect of Parental Deportation on the Education of Transnational Students in Mexico

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<th>Preferred Pseudonym:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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</table>

- Describe the project, telling the interviewee the purpose of the study.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Years at this position:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>Highest Schooling Completed:</td>
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<td>Title:</td>
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1. ¿Cuáles son las funciones del Grupo de Apoyo a Alumnos Migrantes (GAAM)?
2. ¿Cómo identifica a la población en necesidad de atención?
3. ¿A cuántos estudiantes transnacionales atienden en esta ciudad cada año?
4. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo ofrece GAAM a estudiantes transnacionales y sus familias?
5. ¿Cómo se mantiene en contacto GAAM con las escuelas y familias de los estudiantes transnacionales?
6. ¿Cómo es el proceso de incorporación de los y las estudiantes transnacionales a las escuelas?
   a. ¿Qué pasa si el estudiante no cuenta con la documentación necesaria?
   b. En este caso ¿Cuánto tiempo toma el proceso y quién está involucrado?
7. ¿Cómo se determina el grado de incorporación de los estudiantes transnacionales?
8. ¿Qué problemas y/o necesidades considera que tienen los y las estudiantes transnacionales en esta ciudad?
   a. ¿Cuáles son sus éxitos?
   b. ¿Cuáles son sus fracasos?
9. ¿Están preparadas las maestras y los maestros para enseñar a los estudiantes transnacionales?
10. ¿Considera que ha sido efectivo el funcionamiento de GAAM para apoyar a los y las estudiantes transnacionales y sus familias? Explicar.

11. ¿Cuáles han sido las dificultades del programa para apoyar a los y las estudiantes transnacionales y sus familias? Explicar.

12. ¿Sugerencias o recomendaciones sobre cómo proporcionar un mejor apoyo a los y las estudiantes transnacionales y sus familias?

13. ¿Hay algo más de lo que deseé hablar que aún no le he preguntado?

Agradecer al participante. Apagar la grabadora.
Appendix D: Post-Interview Protocol (English and Spanish)

Post-Interview Protocol (English Version)

Title: Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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- Describe in detail the objective of the interview.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

After all the discussions we have had in the interviews, testimonio sessions, and focus groups, think about the following:

1. How has deportation affected your (for parents: your children’s) education?
2. Was it different for boys, girls, or other?
3. How has deportation affected you in general?
4. What changes can you make to improve your situation?
5. What changes can the local, national, and/or international governments make to improve your situation?
6. What did you learn from participating in this study?
7. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Thank your participant. Turn off recorder.
Post Interview Protocol (Spanish Version)

**Title:** Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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<td>Interviewer:</td>
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- Describe in detail the objective of the interview.
- Have the Interviewee read and sign the consent form if not already done so.
- Turn on tape recorder and test it. Begin the interview.

Después de nuestras entrevistas y pláticas en las sesiones de testimonios y grupos de discusión, considera lo siguiente:

1. ¿Cómo afectó la deportación tu educación (o la de tus hijas/os?)
2. ¿Hubo alguna diferencia por ser hombre, mujer, u otro?
3. ¿Cómo afectó la deportación tu vida en general?
4. ¿Qué cambios necesitas hacer tú para mejorar tu situación?
5. ¿Qué cambios necesita hacer el gobierno local, nacional y/o internacional para mejorar tu situación?
6. ¿Qué aprendiste durante tu participación en esta investigación?
7. ¿Hay algo más que quieras agregar?

Agradece a tus participantes. Apaga la grabadora.
Appendix E: Testimonio Protocol (English and Spanish)

Testimonio Protocol (English Version)

Title: Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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<td>Place:</td>
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Explain to participants the purpose of the testimonio, which is to tell their migration story from their own point of view. Participants understand it better when you say: “Talk like if you were writing a book or making a movie about yourself. What do you want people to know about your story?

1. Talk about your own story of migration to Mexico.
   a. What do first remember about coming to Mexico?
2. What has been the hardest part about living in Mexico for you?
3. What has been the hardest part about being a girl living in Mexico for you?
4. What has been the easiest? And the easiest as a girl?
5. What do you want people to know about your story?
6. If you could change anything about your story of migration, what would it be and why?

Thank your participant. Turn off recorder.
**Testimonio Protocol (Spanish Version)**

**Title:** Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

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<td>Place:</td>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
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Explica al participante que el propósito de este testimonio es narrar su historia de migración a México desde su propio punto de vista.

El propósito se entiende mejor cuando se pide que imaginen que están escribiendo un libro o haciendo una película de ellos mismos. ¿Qué quieren que la gente sepa sobre su historia?

1. Habla sobre tu propia historia de migración a México
   a. ¿Qué es lo primero que recuerdas de México?
2. ¿Para ti qué ha sido lo más difícil de vivir en México?
3. Como mujer, ¿qué ha sido lo más difícil?
4. ¿Qué ha sido lo más fácil de vivir en México? Y como mujer, ¿que se te ha hecho fácil?
5. ¿Qué quieres que la gente conozca de tu historia?
6. ¿Si pudieras cambiar algo acerca de tu historia de migración, qué sería y por qué?

Agradece a tus participantes. Apaga la grabadora.
Appendix F: Code System
Appendix G: Coded Transcript Sample

Interviewer: Did the teacher speak English?
Participant: Very little. But it was also beneficial for her, in fact she told me “it benefits me because I interact with him in English and I learn,” and she’s the same one that taught him in 6th grade and she has seen his progress. Let me tell you that my son James [youngest boy], since he was in Kindergarten in the U.S. he has always made the honor roll. Then, when he first got to Mexico I thought, well, he’s always liked to read, he used to get reading certificates, and here in Mexico I was pleasantly surprised to see that it was the same. Every year he gets an award, every trimester he gets first place in reading, in literacy, he holds the record in the entire school for the most books read and that has surprised me because he did not speak Spanish.

Interviewer: Since he first got here?
Participant: Since he got here, in the first trimester he got first place.
Interviewer: I want to ask, the teachers your children have had, have they had any experience studying or traveling to the U.S.?
Participant: No. They are Mexican teachers, they just know basic English but especially this one teacher that taught my son in the third and now in the sixth grade, no, second grade and now sixth grade, she was very helpful.
Interviewer: And why do you think that is? You are the first person to tell me that you have had a good experience with the teachers. What do you think it consists of, the fact that they have been good teachers to your children?
Participant: I think when we as parents open up to them, talk to them, and explain to them our situation, many people are deported, and they’re embarrassed to say it, you know? Why? Because unfortunately here in Mexico we get judged! Why? Because we left our country and they even make fun of you, they say “I’m glad you got deported, because you left your country.” They label you, because you left the country and now you’re back.

Interviewer: Who are “they”?
Participant: The other parents. Parents who find out we’re from “the other side” [the U.S.] they tell you “It’s good that you got deported, why did you leave in the first place?” You know? Then, they make us feel bad, because you’re in a country where you were born but you don’t feel like it’s your country, then when one speaks to the teacher, at least in my case, I went and spoke to the principal, with the teachers, with each one of them and I explained them the situation and it was perfect, they gave my children a lot of support.
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Curriculum Vitae

SANDRA L. CANDEL
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slcandel@gmail.com

EDUCATION

2017
Ph.D. Curriculum & Instruction
Emphasis: Cultural Studies, International Education, & Multicultural Education
Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Nevada, Las Vegas – Las Vegas, NV

Dissertation: Reverse Migration: Documenting How the Educational Experiences of Transnational Youth in Mexican Schools Are Shaped by Parental Deportation.

2012
M.S. Global and International Education
Concentration: Peace Education
College of Education, Drexel University - Philadelphia, PA


1995
B.A. International Business
College of Business and Economics, California State University, Fullerton – Fullerton, CA

PUBLICATIONS

Book Chapters


Book Reviews

Manuscripts Under Review

GRANTS
Submitted

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Graduate Teaching Assistant University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) – Department of Teaching & Learning - Las Vegas, NV.

  As a teacher of record, I advocated for the adoption of a more critically conscious textbook, leading to the consensus among the EDU80 teaching cohort to adopt Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives by James Banks. In addition, I used the supplemental text We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know by Gary Howard, to assist our mostly White, female, preservice teachers to foster the racial awareness needed to teach our predominantly minority student population in public schools. I redesigned the syllabus to accommodate the new texts, collaborated in developing the Equity Teaching Philosophy Project as a common assignment for all EDU 280 sections, and worked with the Office of Online Education staff to restructure the web-based section into a more streamlined platform. I successfully taught 30 students per section in face-to-face and online modalities.

  As a graduate assistant to the teacher of record in this face-to-face course, I was tasked with uploading course materials, keeping syllabus up-to-date, grading assignments, and supporting professor in class discussions.
• CIE 681: Elementary School Instruction (2016)
  As a graduate assistant to the teacher of record in this online course, I was tasked with uploading course materials, keeping syllabus up-to-date, grading assignments, and providing feedback to students’ posts.

• WMST 101: Introduction to Women’s Studies/Gender and Sexuality Studies (2015)
  As a graduate assistant to the teacher of record in this face-to-face course, I was tasked with providing feedback and grading students’ assignments, and supporting professor in class discussions.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) – Department of Teaching & Learning - Las Vegas, NV.

• Student Diversity & Discipline (2016-2017)
  Involved in a collaborative project with one professor in the design, data collection, and data analysis of a qualitative research project that sought to capture the perceptions regarding student diversity and discipline of 21 pre-service teachers enrolled in a Master of Elementary Education program at UNLV.

• Teacher Retention (2014-2017)
  Explored, as part of a collaborative project with a professor and a fellow doctoral student, the reasons teachers who graduate from UNLV stay at their schools, move between schools, or leave the teaching profession using a mixed methods approach.

• Alternative Route to Licensure (2014)
  Assessed, individually, the Alternative Route to Licensure & Graduate Licensure Program (ARL-GLP) in Teacher Education at UNLV using a case study approach.

Researcher, Teachers Without Borders – Seattle, WA.

• Peace Education, (2011-2012)
  Evaluated a Peace Education Program for teachers in Saltillo, Mexico using a mixed methods approach. Designed data-gathering instruments to conduct evaluations in Spanish, and recommended modifications to program based on findings.
ACADEMIC AWARDS

2017 Recipient of the Dunn Doctoral Scholar Award in recognition of innovative, rigorous, and impactful dissertation research at UNLV.

2012 Capstone Experience Award for exemplary performance during the research/thesis experience at Drexel University.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Papers


2017 "Prospective Teachers’ Perceptions of Classroom Disciplinary Action in Relation to Diversity." Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC), Las Vegas, NV, January 30-31.


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<td>2016</td>
<td>“The Hardest Career Ever:’ Persisters’ Reasons For Staying In the Classroom-A Case Study.” Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC), Las Vegas, NV., February 1-2.</td>
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<td><strong>Posters</strong></td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>“Mothering the Academy: A Multi-case Study Using an Intersectional and Post-colonial to Expose and Deconstruct the Experiences of Mother Scholars of Color in Higher Education.” Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC), Las Vegas, NV, January 30-31.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>“Decoding and Challenging Pre-established Notions of Female Oppression.” Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference (EQRC), Las Vegas, NV., February 1-2.</td>
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INVITED TALKS


ACADEMIC WORK


- Research assistant to author Gary Howard for the Third Edition of the book *We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. (2014)

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- Secondary Teacher Education Program Committee at UNLV (2015-2016)
  Collaboratively led the developed a course assignment titled Equity Teaching Philosophy (ETP), as well as gathered and reported data to be included in the annual assessment report as evidence of compliance for course number EDU 280: Valuing Cultural Diversity, that included the University Undergraduate Learning Objectives (UULOs) for the Teacher Education Program at UNLV.

- Volunteer Capstone Committee Member (2012-2015)
  Served as panelist on the capstone defense for students completing the Global and International Education master’s program at Drexel University.

- Co-facilitator for the Peace Circles Project at the Coral Academy of Science in Henderson, NV. (2017)
  Collaboratively helped to develop and co-facilitate a workshop designed to support the school in engaging high school students, parents, and staff in dialog on diversity-related issues; specifically, issues of gender identity and expression, and religious intolerance.
LANGUAGE SKILLS

Spanish: Native language.
English: Full professional oral and written proficiency.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- 2016 American Educational Research Association AERA
- 2016 International Association of Inter-American Studies - IAS
- 2014 Peace & Justice Studies Association – PJSA
- 2013 National Association for Multicultural Education - NAME
- 2011 Comparative and International Education Society - CIES

RESEARCH INTERESTS:

- Transnational Students in Mexican Schools
- Transnational Teacher Preparation and Border Pedagogy
- Forced and Reverse Migration
- Mother Scholars of Color in Higher Education
- Intergroup Dialogue, Forgiveness, and Social Healing
- Critical Peace Education
- Freirean, Feminist, and Emancipatory Pedagogy