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The Other Side: How Mexican-American University Students Living in Mexico Negotiate Their Transborder Identities

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The Other Side: How Mexican-American University Students Living in Mexico
Negotiate Their Transborder Identities

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Independent Study Project.

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for:
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Abstract

Using sociological qualitative methods, this article identifies three main themes on how Mexican university student who lived a significant part of their childhoods in the U.S. without documents negotiate their multicultural identities. Using transnationalism and post-colonial cultural theory as theoretical frames for my investigation, I put these themes in discussion with academic discourse related to the topic to make three conclusions on Mexican-American transborder identity. The first is that the persistence of difficulties transborder university students face integrating into Mexican society show that the difficulties of being a transborder student continue as the students age and mature. Second, is that the students' efforts to have their identities recognized at the university and of operationalizing their bilingualism represent the formation of a new identity that is a product of return migration. Lastly, the identities of transborder students who had lived in the U.S. without authorization are still continuously changing as they mature and further establish themselves as independent adults. The goal of this research is to provide findings and conclusions that will contribute valuable information on how to begin understanding transborder identity and the experience of Mexican-American students and serve as a starting for future research on the topic.

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Introduction

When Rosa thought about Mexico, she couldn't remember much. Besides the food cooked at home, and the stories she was told by her family, it was a foreign country to her. Despite being born in Mexico, at the age of 11, she felt like California was her home. When her family first told her they were moving back to Mexico from California, she was excited. At the time, she had no idea what she was in store for.

“The moment I crossed into Tijuana, I could see the differences. Once I saw the roofs and the houses, I could tell there was a change” (2019).

Rosa, now a university student at La Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, remembers that her transition from the U.S. was anything from easy. Throughout two one-hour interviews, she told me stories of alienation, struggle, and perseverance as she figured out how to comfortably live in a new country. To this day, her journey negotiating her childhood connection to the U.S. and new life in Mexico still proves to be a challenge. DREAMers, or undocumented college students seeking to gain access to higher education in the U.S., have been the focus of a plethora of research seeking to understand how they cope with their multicultural identities in the face of adversity (Leisy Janet Abrego, 2006, 2006; Gonzales, Heredia, & Negrón-Gonzales, 2015; Zatz & Rodriguez, 2015). However, the growth in the number of migrant Mexican families in the U.S. who are choosing to return to Mexico (ENADID, 2014) make college students like Rosa, or Mexican university students who have spent significant parts of childhood in the U.S., increasingly relevant in the lives of Mexican educators. The stories and experiences of these students have fallen under the radar.

While the experience of DREAMers and their struggles (*see* Leisy J. Abrego & Gonzales, 2010) is an important topic to research, there is a less thorough understanding of how Mexican college students who have grown up in the U.S. cope with the difficulties of living in a *new* country. Research on this topic can help Mexican university professors and faculty understand the identities of these students and better accommodate the needs of the growing influx of transborder students, or students with multinational backgrounds who experience drastic transitions across countries (Kleyn, 2017). Given Mexico's brief history integrating migrants into the country in comparison to the U.S. (Kleyn, 2017), anticipating the struggles transborder students face and how they negotiate their identities through academic research can help ease their transition into Mexican society and better understand the effects return migration have on students. Furthermore, at a larger scale, this research is needed to diversify and better understand how migration forms and develops multicultural and transborder identities among students and how nationality serves as an unsatisfactory label for identity.

This project seeks to understand how transborder university students negotiate their identities. I use sociological qualitative methods to investigate the questions: How do transborder Mexican university students who now live in Mexico but lived a significant time in the United States without documents negotiate their multicultural identities? How do experiences at a Mexican university reinforce or challenge their identities? How do their identities differ from their peers? I conducted two rounds of interviews with four transborder students I accessed through a mutual connection to identify themes on how they expressed and coped with their multicultural identities. Throughout this paper, I refer to transborder students who lived in the U.S. as "Mexican-American" for ease and to recognize their multicultural backgrounds regardless of the limitations of nationality and citizenship. The initial intention of my project was to interview transborder

students from three categories: students who were born in the U.S. and moved to Mexico, students who were born in Mexico and lived in the U.S. undocumented before returning, and students who were residents of the U.S. and returned to Mexico. However, it is difficult to identify and reach out to transborder students because their transborder backgrounds are highly personal and invisible to an outsider like me. In connecting with transborder students through mutual networks, they all represented students who were born in Mexico but lived in the U.S. without documents. Therefore, I limited the scope of my investigation to focus on transborder students who lived as undocumented migrants in the past to recognize the lack of generalizability of my findings. Nevertheless, the goal of this research is to provide findings and conclusions to begin contributing valuable information on how to begin understanding transborder identity and the experience of Mexican-American students and serve as a starting point for future research on the topic.

In identifying three main themes describing how Mexican-American university students negotiate their multicultural identities, I engage with academic discussions related to the topic to make three conclusions. The first is that the persistence of difficulties transborder university students face integrating into Mexican society show that the difficulties of being a transborder student continue as the students age and mature. Second, is that the students' efforts to have their identities recognized at the university and of operationalizing their bilingualism represent the formation of a new identity that is a product of return migration. Lastly, the identities of transborder students who had lived in the U.S. without authorization are still continuously changing as they mature and further establish themselves as independent adults.

History of Mexican-American Migration

For this project, my goal is to capture and begin describing how transborder, Mexican-American university students negotiate their multi-dimensional identities living and navigating college in Mexico after having lived a significant part of their childhoods in the United States without documents. However, it is important to consider the history of undocumented Mexican migration to the U.S. to better understand why there has been an increase in Mexican-American students who have returned to Mexico after spending a significant part of their childhoods in the U.S. In this section of my paper, I give a brief history of Mexican-American migration to help explain why some Mexican migrants who left Mexico and raised their children in the U.S. inevitably returned with their families.

While migration from Mexico to the U.S. has persisted for over a century, variables like the length of migrants stay, how they entered the country, and who came with them have changed over time. The current state of U.S.-Mexican migration seen today - a state characterized by undocumented migrants and of a militarized border patrol - is very recent development (Rosenblum, Kandel, Ribando Seelke, & Wasem, 2012). The Congressional Research Service report on Mexican migration describes the U.S.-Mexican migration system as having passed four main stages: short-term limited flows prior to 1920, temporary seasonal work via the “Bracero” program, growing undocumented migration following amendments to immigration law in 1965, and increased militarization and continued growth of the undocumented Mexican population (Rosenblum et al., 2012). The most consequential phase that facilitated the increase in unauthorized migration and birthed the current immigration system in the U.S. is the third: the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act. Prior to this law, the U.S. had

historically relied on temporary Mexican migrants to provide cheap labor. Despite forcibly deporting migrants during times of economic strain, the U.S.'s sustained labor demand for workers from Mexico during both World Wars and other eras of economic growth allowed for Mexican migrants to establish prolific social and economic networks in the U.S. over across decades. From the early 20th century until 1965, most Mexican laborers entered and exited the U.S. seasonally to complete mainly agricultural work (Rosenblum et al., 2012).

The changes to the immigration law in 1965 prioritized legal migration via family reunification, imposed a numerical cap to the number of migrants that could enter the U.S. from each country, and drastically decreased the number of visas granted for seasonal workers. While the intention behind the shift was to control Mexican migration, the policy changes ignored the U.S.'s persistent demand for inexpensive labor as well as Mexican migrants' reliance on generations of social and economic networks in the country (Massey, Durand, & Pren, 2016). From 1964 to 1965, as described by leading migration scholars Douglas Massey, Jorge Durand, and Karen Pren, "the situation had changed dramatically for now the vast majority of the migrants were 'illegal' and thus by definition 'criminals' and 'lawbreakers'" (2016, p. 3). The increased barriers imposed on migrants to legally enter the country forced migrants who had once regularly entered the country legally for employment to enter the country via clandestine, unauthorized alternatives. From 1965 forward, undocumented migration increased to maintain the social economic connections between migrants and the U.S., and policymakers militarized and escalated border patrol in response (Massey et al., 2016). The costs and risks associated with migrating to the U.S. skyrocketed and rendered circular, temporary migration too difficult to sustain. One of the biggest shifts in migration flows after 1965 is that migrants now stayed in the U.S. for much longer and often traveled with their entire families. The population of long-term, undocumented Mexican

migrant families in the U.S. today is the product of legislative inefficacy, a lack of understanding of how the social and economic networks established by migrants across decades, and U.S. dependence on cheap labor (Massey et al., 2016). This policy shift birthed a population of Mexican-American migrant children in the United States, some of which were brought as children and others who were born in the U.S. From 1990 to 2006, the undocumented population from Mexico grew from approximately 2 million to a high point of 6.9 million (Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad, 2018). While their anonymity makes knowing a precise number of Mexican migrants are underage, in 2010, estimates were made that there were more than 2.1 million undocumented young people that have been in the U.S. since childhood and over a million are now adults (McHugh & Batalova, 2010).

Despite the large population of undocumented youth in the United States following the 1965 immigration amendments, there were significant efforts to inhibit their access to public education (Gonzales et al., 2015). However, undocumented migrant access to public education was secured by the 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyer v. Doe*. The case challenged the constitutionality of a Texas statute that allowed for local school districts to deny enrollment to undocumented immigrants because they were perceived to impose an economic burden on the public education system (*Plyer v. Doe*, 1982). Catherine Winter (2017), editor of American Public Radio and two-time recipient of the Silver Gavel from the American Bar Association, argues that the case's continued relevance and sustained impact on the lives of undocumented migrants are what "led to generations of educated, English-speaking, undocumented young people who were better able to advocate for themselves than their parents" and fuel what we know now as the Dreamer movement (Winter, 2017). While the case was a victory of undocumented migrants, its focus on states' rights left the population vulnerable to federal legislation limiting their access to

public benefits. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act which barred undocumented immigrant access to both in-state tuition and federal financial aid making higher education prohibitively expensive (Yates, 2004). In effect, the case's decision guaranteed K-12 education but fell short in guaranteeing unimpeded access to higher education and hindered their ability to attend college after graduation. In the decades that followed, undocumented Mexican-American students would be educated in American K-12 schools but were denied the ability to pursue higher education like their peers.

While Mexican migrants are no strangers to controversy, their notoriety arguably peaked in recent years when they found themselves at the center of the longest government shutdown in American history (Gramlich, 2019; Scott & Flaherty, 2019). The shutdown was caused by a dispute over the construction of a southern border wall to quell what the President, the Vice-President, and former secretary of Homeland security have described as a "crisis" at the Mexican border (The White House, 2018). Despite the perceived chaos at the border, the number of Mexican migrants entering the U.S. has decreased since 2006 with several sources concluding that the net rate of unauthorized migration has reached near zero (Qiu, 2018). According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, from 2009 to 2014 there was a net loss of 140,000 Mexican migrants in the United States (*ENADID*, 2014). The reasons explaining why the number of Mexicans entering the U.S. is decreasing range from a slow recovery after the 2008 financial crisis to escalated enforcement of immigration laws (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). However, a salient point is that migrants themselves cited family reunification as the primary reason they chose to return (*ENADID*, 2014). These changes in migration between the U.S. and Mexico and the increasingly dramatized "crisis" at the border has brought attention to a growing class of migrant

Mexican students who have returned to Mexico (Kleyn, 2017). These students are often left to negotiate their multiple identities as they attempt to carve a sense of belonging in their new communities, yet their vulnerability and lack of autonomy can often silence and obscure their narratives. While return migration is not a new phenomenon, the increase of U.S. raised students in Mexican schools and increased threat of deportation under the Trump Administration makes their experience increasingly relevant in the lives of Mexican educators (Kleyn, 2017).

Literature Review

While there has been plenty of research on the experience of Mexican-American students in U.S. schools and colleges, particularly of undocumented students (Leisy J. Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Leisy Janet Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011), there is little research on the experience of Mexican-American students who attend college in Mexico after leaving the United States or how they negotiate their identities. Therefore, for this investigation, I sought it important to consider two main academic discussions on migration to best contextualize the identity of transborder students: research on the experience of undocumented students in U.S. schools and past research on the experience of transborder students in Mexican high schools. I consider research on the experience of undocumented students in U.S. schools to understand how schools functioned as a space to integrate them into U.S. society and how that form a multi-cultural identity. I also examine past research on the experience of transborder students in Mexican high schools can begin to reveal how students negotiate their identities before college.

While the assimilation of immigrants does not follow one particular path or formula, many migration scholars have recognized that public schools serve a crucial role in the lives of migrant children by in providing students with socialization mechanisms that promote their integration into

society (Rumbaut, 1997). Despite their lack of citizenship, a leading scholar on immigration and social inequality, Robert G. Gonzales (2011), asserts that public U.S. schools provide undocumented students with a sense of inclusion and belonging. Gonzales (2011) conducted 150 interviews with Latino undocumented students in Southern California to comprehend their transition from adulthood and their experience as undocumented students in school. His research found that their uninhibited access to the same resources as their peers provides undocumented students with an unusual experience of inclusion among their classmates who are citizens. Unlike other social institutions whose resources require citizenship status like welfare benefits and subsidized health insurance, K-12 schools serve as a space where undocumented students can develop “aspirations rooted in the belief that they were part of the fabric of the nation and would have better opportunities than their parents” (Gonzales, 2011, p. 608). Moreover, according to immigration scholar Leisy Abrego’s (2011) sociological examination of how illegality is experienced in work-versus-school contexts, many undocumented students do not have to cope with the burdens of their legal status until late in their high school careers when they begin to apply for internships, college, and jobs (353). Despite their legal limitations, they tend to develop a greater sense of belonging in the United States after “being a legitimized member of such an important social institution as a school” (354). Unlike their parents who may reinforce Mexican cultural heritages and practices at home, undocumented students may find themselves more integrated into U.S. society and more likely to develop a multi-cultural identity. Despite their lack of legal status, especially for students who returned to Mexico at a younger age, they may have a stronger cultural identification with the U.S. making their transition back to Mexico more challenging. Their cultural integration into U.S. culture can make Mexico feel foreign regardless of their nationality. These students often find themselves in Mexico having no memory or

recollection of it aside from what they see in their households (Hamann, Zuniga, & Garcia, 2006; Zuniga & Hamann, 2011).

While there is little research that directly relates to the topic of this project, the most salient research is a study by Tatyana Kleyn (2017), immigration and bilingual studies scholar, centered on detailing the experiences of transborder high school students in Oaxaca as they transition to Mexico after spending a portion of their childhoods in the U.S. In her investigation, she interviewed and served as a faculty advisor to three Mexican-American students. The goal of her investigation is to uncover how U.S.-raised youth experience their transition to Mexico and how this shift affects how they view the world (Kleyn, 2017). Her research produced three key findings. The first is that there is a disconnect between their “cultural” or self-constructed, social citizenship and “political” or legal citizenship. According to Kleyn (2017), these students informed their identities based on their sense of belonging and legal citizenship, with some of them feeling as if their lack of legal recognition in the U.S. inhibited their ability to identify as American. In her words, “these students are still coming to terms with how they see themselves in comparison to how they are viewed from the outside and by government definitions” (Kleyn, 2017, p. 79). The notion of cultural and political citizenship touched on by Kleyn is an academic conversation referenced in other analyses of the migrant experience and is important to understand in contextualizing the identity of migrants. The concept of cultural and cultural or social citizenship is best explained in Linda Bosniak’s (1998) *The Citizenship of Aliens*. In her text, Bosniak (1998) how the concept of citizenship has been revived due to its increased relevance in political and social thought. In the political realm and throughout history, citizenship has been emphasized as a legal status due to increased control of immigration and the expansion of deportation. Citizenship has been ossified by the exclusion of migrants and by limiting their due process rights. Socially,

citizenship has been expanded to include subjective criteria and access to aspects of civil society like democratic participation, cultural inclusivity, and education (Bosniak, 1998). She explores the contradiction that arises from reinforcing citizenship through the exclusion of non-residents like undocumented migrants and expanding citizenship to inclusive, subjective measures. Both definitions cannot exist in harmony because one excludes non-residents and the other encourages their participation (Bosniak, 1998). This tension allows for the non-residents who are categorically excluded from political interpretations of citizenships to also reaffirm their membership or belonging to a nation-state by subscribing to aspirational, more subjective conceptions of citizenship. The contradictions between political and social citizenship referenced by Kleyn and explained by Bosniak show how identity formation for these students can transcend formal conceptions of national identity and instead pivots on positionality and personal experience living and being excluded in both countries.

Kleyn's (2017) second finding is centered on the role of language as a key expression of the identities they chose to suppress or embrace. In particular, she notes how some students from Oaxaca must often oscillate between three languages: English, Spanish, and Zapotec. Given Oaxaca's high indigenous population, students often must negotiate their indigenous identity on top of their U.S. or Mexican identity. Students may often subscribe to cultural politics that overvalue European languages like English and Spanish and undervalues Zapotec or perceive learning Zapotec as an opportunity to connect with another aspect of their culture. Nevertheless, how students lose and learn languages represents the complex journey of negotiating their identity (Kleyn, 2017). Lastly, Kleyn (2017) examines the role of schools in Mexico and their differences from U.S. schools. In contrast to U.S. schools' plethora of programs for migrant students like English as a Second or New Language programs (ESL/ENL), Mexican schools didn't offer similar

services to transborder students. Kleyn (2017) cites Mexico's brief history educating migrant students in comparison to the U.S.'s prolonged history as a receiving country as an explanation for the differences. The lack of services for students often makes the transition to Mexico difficult and can make them feel alienated from their peers. Their lack of fluency in Spanish and lack of support in Mexico can place the burden of establishing a sense of belonging on the students themselves. Moreover, students may feel isolated from their peers or at times ridiculed; their difficulty with the Spanish language and their mastery of English outs them as different from other students. Despite their difficulties, the students tended to also see their bilingual proficiency as a benefit and as a tool (Kleyn, 2017).

While both the Gonzales, Abrego and Kleyn investigations shine a light on how transborder university students may express or form their identities at young ages, the question of how these students cope with their transition and reconcile their multinational identities in the long-run still stands. This paper seeks to extend their themes and uncover how transborder university students negotiate their shifting and competing identities. In particular, my investigation wants to compare how these students negotiate and express their identities at an age where they have more autonomy and independence than their childhoods and have more of a vision of their future plans.

Theoretical Frame and Methodology

To understand how transborder students negotiate their identities, it is important to base my findings on how these students perceive and craft their identities in their own terms and in their own voices. Considering how unique each student's experience with cultural and political citizenship and identity in Mexico and the U.S can be, it is necessary to allow them to personally detail how they express and form their identities. While an ethnographic study focused on narrating

the students' experience in college would be ideal for this investigation, the lack of time limits my options for field research. Therefore, for this investigation, I used qualitative sociological research methods to understand how transborder students negotiate their multi-cultural identities and compared it to scholarly discussions in the literature review to begin understanding their particular experiences as transborder university students. I based my methods, interview questions, and analysis off of two main theoretical lenses: transnationalist assimilation theory and diasporic identity theory. In this section of the paper, I will elaborate on how I conducted my investigation and the rationale behind it.

Theoretical Frame

Over the course of four weeks, I created two interview guides with standardized questions based on transnational assimilation theory and diasporic identity theory to conduct two individual hour-long interviews with four transborder students. My goal in using these theories to frame my interviews was to ensure that my interview questions would help me describe and understand how students expressed their own identity rather than impose my own biases or notions of culture and identity on students. Considering that these students were forming their identities based on their experiences in two different countries, I use transnationalist assimilation theory to frame my interviews. Kleyn (2017) similarly uses this frame as in her methodology, but it was introduced by scholars on assimilation theory, Linda Basch, Nina Schiller, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1992). Transnationalism is defined as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p. 1). These links can take the form of dynamic social, familial, and economic ties that are culturally patterned and unify migrant communities. Transnationalist assimilation theory argues

that a migrant can negotiate and maintain ties to both their sending and receiving countries to create and exchange new forms of identity and existence. This theory disrupts classical models of assimilation that theorize that migrants must abandon their cultural heritages to successfully assimilate to the cultural status quo of their receiving country (Schiller et al., 1992). I chose to use transnationalism to frame my interview questions because it recognizes that the interviewees, despite their similarities, have a diverse set of experiences that cannot easily be described with current notions of political citizenship like nationality or by social citizenship like language. Instead, their identities may manifest itself as a unique expression and mixture of both rather than the adoption or loss of an alternative culture.

Furthermore, along with transnationalism, I used diasporic identity theory to frame my interviews to capture how students form their identities and underscore that since their initial departure from Mexico, or first years in Mexico, their identities shift and continuously change based on their positionality. Rather than seek to categorize and describe the identities of my interviews based solely on factors like nationality, language, and other large generalizations, I sought it important to take an approach to their identity that recognized the diversity of experiences of the interviewees and how monolithic views of Mexican and American culture may overlook their own experiences. In his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, cultural identity theorist Stuart Hall (1996) presents two different definitions of cultural identity. While his essay focuses on black and Caribbean culture, his focus on oppressed people, colonialism, and post-colonial thought relates well to the experience of migrants who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to the effects of colonialism, neo-liberal interventionist politics, and racism (Gonzalez, 2006). Hall's first definition of identity refers to the common and dominant perspective that identity is "one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self'" informed by shared history and ancestry

(Hall, 1996, p. 223). While Hall recognizes that his first definition of culture is a useful tool in establishing a sense of unity within a society, he believes that it imposes a false sense of “coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas” (Hall, 1996, p. 224). In short, it does not consider the diversity of cultures and experiences of marginalized individuals and instead confines them to identities that are defined by their struggles against oppression. Instead, Hall offers a definition of cultural identity that recognizes the similarities in the identities of individuals, but that continuously changes based on how individuals position themselves within the past and that is subject to the “continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power” (Hall, 1996, p. 225). Thus, in my interviews, I sought to ask questions on how the participants saw themselves across time and relative to the institutions around them, like school and their communities. I strived to capture their identities as the product of a discursive and dynamic process instead of concrete, and stagnant category.

Methods

Using transnationalism and Hall’s diasporic theory, I crafted two interviews. The first interview (Appendix A) had the goal of obtaining basic information about when students moved from each country, how long they stayed, and who left with them. I also sought to gain an idea of how students identified themselves during their transition during the first few years of their transition to Mexico to compare to a second interview (Appendix B) where I uncovered how they identified themselves currently relative to their universities, families, and communities. Knowing that the experience of migrating across countries can be a traumatic and difficult experience, I did not seek to ask questions about their journey entering or exiting each country. I also did not ask about their legal status to avoid encouraging them to unwillingly share sensitive information,

however, they voluntarily shared with me that they lacked citizenship or legal residency when they told stories of their childhoods and their inability to access services like federal financial aid. I was able to identify and contact the four students who participated in the project with the help to my project advisor, Omar Nuñez, who had a connection to a faculty member at a local university, La Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO), who was working on a project with Mexican-American students who attend the university. My advisor contacted each of the students individually and met with them to introduce them to my project, the School of International Training, my study abroad program facilitating my stay in Mexico, and the Ollin Tlahtoalli School, the school in Oaxaca I was hosted at. After the preliminary meeting with Omar, if the students expressed interest in participating, they would meet with me and I would provide them with a voluntary consent form (Appendix C) explaining the scope of the project, the benefits of participating, and the steps I'd take to protect their identities.

All interviews were held in-person at the Ollin Tlahtoalli school in the participants choice of either English, Spanish, or both and lasted approximately one hour. I recorded all interviews with a smartphone, saved on a password-protected USB, and later partially transcribed and translated them. The interviews totaled just 8 hours and Appendix D gives details on the timeline for each interview. All participants were above the legal age of 18 to be able to consent without a parent or guardian's permission and were provided with an alias to protect their identity. All recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed within twelve months of the interviews. To analyze the data, I coded the transcriptions of the interviews and identified themes and trends that described how these students negotiated their identity in their schools and in their communities. Given that I have a small sample size of students and only a few interviews, I could not detail a complete narrative of how students experience their transition back to Mexico. Therefore, I focused more

on what the students had in common in how they negotiated their identities over their particular differences and selected quotes of the interviews that most represented how students negotiate and express their identities.

I acknowledge that my own position as the child of Latinx migrants and upbringing in the U.S. could potentially serve as a source of bias throughout the investigation. To combat this possibility, I sent my findings to the students prior to submitting the paper so that they could ensure I accurately portrayed their experiences and identities. Nevertheless, my background gives me insights on how to protect the identities of students, dignify the narratives of migrant students, and understand the generalizability of my findings. My fluency of the Spanish language also allowed me to be able to communicate effectively with students in their choice of English or Spanish and translate my interviews.

In addition, I recognize there are some limitations to my findings that may bias my research. In particular, I interviewed a small sample of students who were very active at their college and had participated in similar research in the past. Also, all the students represent the views of transborder students who had lived in the U.S. without documents, which may have affected their life plans and integration into Mexico. The initial goal of this paper was to interview and analyze interviews with three sets of transborder students: some who were born in Mexico but had lived in the U.S. without documents, some who were born in the U.S., and some who had dual citizenship. However, when contacting subjects through my limited network, all students later disclosed that they were Mexican nationals that had lived in the U.S. without documents. These factors limit the generalizability of my findings, however, this project can begin identifying and parsing some similarities in how transborder students, specifically those who are Mexican nationals and lack U.S. citizenship, express and cope with their multicultural identities and to put

these findings in conversation with relevant academic conversations. These themes may draw conclusions on a very specific set of transborder students, but the themes may also bear similarities to those who have different nationalities or citizenship statuses.

Findings

Throughout my interviews, I heard a variety of stories and explanations on how Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle all formed and expressed their identities. While their stories are compelling, the variety of lived experiences that marked their transition back to Mexico make it difficult to detail how each student individually formed their identities. Therefore, I focused on three main themes among their responses that begin to uncover how they negotiate their identities within their schools and their communities that I saw connected their experiences. I identified these themes as establishing agency by crafting spaces for social recognition, operationalizing language and transborder skills, and recontextualizing their transition to Mexico.

Overview of Students

The students, Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle, all attend UABJO and are part of the thirty-three transborder students in their department of 4,659 students (CEVIE-UABJO, 2017). While they are all at different phases of their undergraduate career, each of the students is pursuing a four-year bachelor's degree in language teaching and take classes in English with the expectation they will become English teachers. All four students were Mexican-born but left Mexico at different ages. Rosa left Mexico as an infant, Carolina, and Luz left in early elementary school, and Gabrielle left at eleven years old. Despite their differences in age, they had little memory of their lives in Mexico before leaving for the U.S., mainly tidbits of celebrations with family,

vacations, and other events of that nature. All students, but Gabrielle who returned to Mexico at eighteen, returned to Mexico at the ages of ten to eleven. Many Oaxacans tend to migrate to California (Kleyn, 2017), Rosa was the only student who lived there, while Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle lived in Arkansas, Georgia, and New Jersey, respectively.

Establishing Agency by Crafting Spaces and Opportunities for Social Recognition

Kleyn (2017) mentions that transborder students feel alienated from their peers in middle and high school from the language barriers and occasional ridicule. However, in the interviews, I saw that this alienation persisted, but mostly from behalf of faculty and their teachers than their peers who found out they were transborder students. As a response, students establish agency over their own identities by crafting spaces and opportunities for social recognition to cope with their isolation. I saw this particular negotiation of identity manifest itself in two ways: reframing the stigma surrounding Mexican-American students by functioning as a resource and participating in project and research on the experience of transborder students.

For all the students, they said it did not take long for others to know they had lived some part of their childhoods in the U.S. In Rosa and Carolina's cases, they mentioned that language was the main indicator they lived some part of their lives abroad. As Rosa states,

“The majority of people figure I’m a transnational student when I speak, especially my pronunciation. When you express yourself, they can tell I speak differently, a little strange... I have trouble rolling my r’s or understanding certain sayings or idioms. Mexicans use a lot of those, so the moment they know something is going on” (2019).

For students like Luz who did not mention her Spanish pronunciation as an indicator of their transborder backgrounds, her English language proficiency in class garnered the attention of

others. Gabrielle, who arrived in Mexico just before getting to college, said that most students found out when they asked her what high school she went to. However, none of the students claimed they felt uncomfortable sharing that info with their peers. They did, however, see that the stigma surrounding their identity as Mexican-American students. Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle mentioned that while they weren't uncomfortable sharing their pasts, some students thought that the students' mastery of English and high test scores were a sign of arrogance. As Carolina shared,

“People usually find out I wasn't raised here... I'm not too nervous about that. I get a little nervous to demonstrate my fluency in English. They think that you think you're 'all that.' There's some prejudices that make me not want to participate as much as I want to” (2019)

But she claims that at some point, she had to get over it. Instead of fearing what her classmates would think, she saw it more useful to help others.

“Once they heard me fluently read some paragraphs in class, it keeps people wondering. And they start talking to me and getting to know me better, so they sort of break down whatever they used to think of me... then I help them with their work and they become friendly. They stop seeing me as the 'one who lived in the U.S.'” (2019)

Luz doubled down on this sentiment of functioning as a resource with students to mitigate the stigma surrounding her identity:

“When I participate in class, I don't do it to show off. I do it so people can approach me and I can help them... things like that... once I participated more in school more and people started recognizing me, it even helped me get better” (2019)

For these students, unlike their experience at younger ages, were able to gain agency over their identities and feel more comfortable among their peers by helping other students. They directly combating the stigma in their personal lives by assisting their peers and presenting their

bilingualism as a tool. Therefore, while their language may out their identities and leave them vulnerable to the prejudices held by some of their peers, they are able to establish and recognize their identities among their peers in their own terms.

Furthermore, when asked about their experiences with the stigma surrounding their American pasts, all students mentioned more instances of their English language professors and members of the language teaching programs faculty alienating them most from their peers by investing less time and resources in them. They have to fight against the common expectation Luz described that *“you can speak English perfect. They don’t see you as a normal student anymore and expect you to perform the best”* (2019). As a solution, students participated in initiatives with the goal of identifying and providing a forum for transborder students and even conducted their own research on transborder students.

When asked about what resources were available for transborder students, none of the students could name any. As Gabrielle mentions, during her time at the university, students like her fade into the background:

“They have ignored us. No one really wants to hear our story because it’s irrelevant to others. Since we are back in Mexico now, they just expect us to get over it. But there’s a lot of us, I’m not the only one. But I’m sure at one point of our lives we’ve been told to get over it” (2019)

As a whole, more so than stigma from their peers, the students felt that the stigma against transborder students among the faculty affected them more. It is common for faculty to feel intimidated by transborder students and their advanced pronunciation. In the highest-level English classes - classes Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle are in - the teachers will often spend less time teaching transborder students or assume they do not need support from professors on assignments. In some instances, as described by Rosa, professors will refuse to teach them:

“Sometimes the teachers don’t pronounce words correctly, and when they hear us say those same words with a more correct pronunciation, they sometimes won’t even want us in their classrooms” (2019).

After several years of having little to no resources for transborder students, the director of the language teaching program approached Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle with the idea of starting a project that would identify and bring transborder students together. The students all participated as organizers and mediators for the program and helped give the faculty feedback on the project. While the initiative was proposed by a new director of the faculty, the students led the execution and helped with the analysis of the findings. The first two goals of the project were simple but represented major strides for transborder students. Carolina shared:

“The first goal was identifying [transborder] students throughout our program. It hadn’t been done before. I think there are around thirty-three. The four of us, the ones who are in charge, divided up the classrooms to run a census. We stopped by every class and asked transborder student to fill out a small survey. Our end goal is to make recommendations to the faculty. The next step is to organize a group reflection so we can talk about our similarities and challenges. We’ll transcribe the conversations and help make these recommendations” (2019).

Despite now having support from one faculty member, a significant amount of the labor of establishing a community or forum for transborder students fell on Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle. Quite literally, they have taken the responsibility of recognizing students with their backgrounds and giving them a space and a platform to share their narratives. In the absence of even a basic form of recognition, these students spearheaded the initiative. Moreover, this kind of work spilled into their own personal interests, with students like Luz and Gabrielle working on theses on similar topics.

Operationalizing Language and Transborder Skills

The second theme I identified among the students is the operationalization of language and transborder skills to meet their goals or reinforce their identities. When forming their life expectations and goals in college, the students have been able to use their bilingualism as a tool in their academic careers and to help them navigate their multicultural identities.

While all the students are determined to graduate with a degree in language teaching and become English language teachers, not all of them started with those plans in mind. For Luz and Gabrielle, they started their academic careers studying different topics. Luz started at UABJO studying odontology.

“I liked it, but my professors didn’t get that I was more comfortable reading some things in English. So, when I asked for some readings in English, they’d say no... it had to be Spanish, no exceptions. So, by the time we had exams, I had some trouble. So, I changed...” (2019).

When asked about when she started feeling the most comfortable sharing that she was a transborder student, she added,

“It started when I joined languages, I didn’t feel comfortable before... it was the acceptance. I felt more acceptance. I didn’t feel rejected, I felt like I had a benefit” (2019).

While Luz enjoyed studying odontology, it didn’t seem to recognize the support she needed from her professors. Knowing that she was fluent in English and Spanish and could use those skills in another department that would, if not directly recognize, at least take advantage of the opportunities offered to students. Luz was able to focus on the benefits offered by her bilingualism to not only satisfied her professional goals but also allowed her to more fully adjust and navigate her schooling to accommodate her multi-cultural background. Gabrielle had a similar experience.

After taking a year before college to work at a restaurant, she attended a private university in the city and studied business administration.

“I only studied at that school for about a year... In some part, I felt pressured by my mom to pick something to study after my year off. When picking what I study, I knew that [language teaching] is something I know, something I am familiar with... I liked [business administration], I liked customer service and those type of things... but later, I thought I didn’t want to spend my time in a restaurant three hundred sixty-five days a year... When thinking about a career where I could spend more time with my family, I thought a teacher would be great. I knew English already, so it was going to be easy” (2019).

For Gabrielle, she was able to use her language skills and multicultural experience to pursue a career that satisfied her own expectations and formed her life plans around it. While her bilingualism in part represents her multinational upbringing, she was able to mold and use it as something she could make a living from and meet her goals.

In addition to using their bilingualism to achieve their goals and accommodate their multicultural identities, the students similarly used their bilingualism to participate in programs that would fund trips to the U.S. that allowed students to reconnect with U.S. culture. When asked about whether they thought about returning to the U.S. at some point in their lives, Rosa and Carolina said they’d like to visit. However, Luz and Gabrielle that said they’d want to live in the U.S. again. Regardless as to whether the student wanted to the return to the U.S. to visit or to live in the future, all the students had a clear idea of how they could achieve that goal in the language teaching department. Rosa and Carolina mentioned that they’d like to return to the U.S. to reconnect with the nostalgia or dreams of their childhood. For Carolina, she mentioned that she’d like to return for the fast food, something she missed since being in Mexico. She planned on

working at a summer language camp as a teacher, an opportunity offered in her department, to hopefully return to the U.S. one day. For Rosa, who already had the opportunity to travel back to the U.S. once before, was able to achieve a childhood dream of visiting New York through an academic program she participated in. Marylin, whose goals were to live in the U.S., was already considering pursuing a master's degree at a university in her 'home state,' Georgia where she had already presented research at before. Luz also has a similar goal of returning to the U.S. via a university research scholarship.

Through the language department itself or using the opportunities offered by the department, these students were able to use their bilingualism as a tool to achieve goals that satisfied their own expectations and embraced their transborder background.

Recontextualizing Their Transition to Mexico

The final overarching theme I found throughout my interviews was that the students recontextualize their transition to Mexico over time as they adapt to their new environments and integrate themselves into their communities. I saw this theme portrayed in how the students thought more critically about their legal status in the U.S. and their relative career opportunities as adults and how they identified with a more localized Oaxacan culture.

During the beginning of their transition back to the U.S., some students had tumultuous relationships with their parents. Both Gabrielle and Carolina detailed that they had some animosity toward their parents for bringing them to Mexico and away from home. They both described this time in their lives as their 'rebellious years' and justified it as a response to the difficulties they were facing during their transition. Carolina said she mostly acted out in class:

“For a while, I acted out, especially in English class. Why should I try? why should I care?... I was upset” (2019).

For Gabrielle, she described her experience during her relationship with her mom as difficult.

“When we got here, she didn’t really pay too much attention to me because of my little brothers. I know that she needed here more, but I was jealous... For a long time on top of that, my mom thought that I blamed her for everything that was going wrong and she felt guilty” (2019).

However, as they have gotten older, they both mentioned that they have more of an understanding of why they left, citing that if they would have stayed in the U.S., they may not have had the same opportunity to go to college. This realization made them rethink their transition to Mexico. Gabrielle expressed,

“I’ve made my mom feel very bad for making the decision to take me back. But thanks to that decision, I’m here today. It was a difficult process to understand after thirteen to fourteen years [in Mexico] that I wouldn’t have the same opportunities [in the U.S]. It’s been difficult to let my mom know that she didn’t make a mistake” (2019).

For Carolina, as she got older, she came to understand that her life in Mexico could help her in the long run and that she considered her rebellious years as a consequence of not realizing her new opportunities.

“I don’t know when exactly it happened, but I started to like my life in Mexico more. It was like a bad phase. Once that passed, I realized there were beautiful things in Mexico. And here, I can get a degree. And in the U.S., it something I wouldn’t be able to. So, I realized that here, I could also have a good life...” (2019).

For both Carolina and Gabrielle, they came to terms that their lack of legal status limited their possibilities in the U.S. and that they could pursue opportunities that may not have been possible in the U.S. due to their legal status.

In addition to realizing some of the opportunity they had in Mexico and repairing some of their relationships with family members, the students also mentioned that they did not necessarily have as strong of a Mexican cultural identity as they had with more regional, local identities. The students continuously mentioned the unique culture in Oaxaca as a factor that made them feel integrated into the community. I realized this when I asked whether they felt more closely attached to American or Mexican culture. I usually got a response along the lines of feeling more Oaxacan, or in Gabrielle and Carolina's cases, more connected to the smaller communities their parents were from. Laura and Gabrielle also mentioned that they would be interested in learning Zapotec one day so that they could connect with their families and their cultures. As put well by Gabrielle,

"It's an experience that is unique. All of Mexico has different foods and different customs, I feel like I connect with [my parent's town] more than I actually do with Mexico" (2019).

The three themes I identified through my interviews represent strategies that these students implemented to negotiate their identities at their colleges and in their communities. These strategies are an effort to begin describing how these students seek recognition and continue to shift and accommodate their multicultural identities over time.

Discussion and Conclusion

My findings uncover three main themes that detail how Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle negotiate their transborder identities in college and in their communities. When put in discussion with the literature review, these strategies would agree with Gonzales (2011) and Abrego (2011)

that schools represent a legitimating institution in the lives of transborder, university students. Furthermore, when the findings are compared to Kleyn's (2017) research and framed with transnational assimilation theory and Hall's (1996) notion of identity, I make three main conclusions. The first is that the persistence of difficulties underscored by Kleyn in the lives of transborder students show that the difficulties of being a transborder student continue as the students age and mature. Second, is that the students' efforts to have their identities recognized at the university and of operationalizing their bilingualism represent the formation of a new identity that is a product of return migration. Lastly, the identities of transborder students who had lived in the U.S. without authorization are still continuously changing as they mature and further establish themselves as independent adults.

In the literature review, I covered work by Robert G. Gonzales (2011) and Leisy Abrego (2011) on the role schools play in the lives of migrant children in the U.S. My findings agree with their conclusion that schools can provide students with a sense of inclusion and serve a role as a legitimizing institution in the face of uncertainty. While Gonzales and Abrego's research focused on U.S. high schools, my findings similarly suggested that universities can offer students with a feeling of inclusion. This is best seen in the finding that the students operationalized their language to advance their careers and navigate their multicultural identities and in how Carolina and Gabrielle recontextualized their transition in Mexico and their parent's decision to return more positively than in the past. The students were able to use their bilingualism as a tool for advancing their careers and embrace their multicultural backgrounds within the language teaching department. The university, in part, gave students a platform where they could take advantage of their bilingual skills and provided them with a space where they could meet their life goals in Mexico. The university represented a space where their bilingualism was a beneficial consequence

of their transborder backgrounds and a skill that could be capitalized in Mexico as a tool for social mobility and as a pathway for students to integrate into Mexican society. In addition, Carolina and Gabrielle's recontextualization of their transition to Mexico suggested the role schools could play in providing students with a sense of inclusion. The opportunity Carolina and Gabrielle of obtaining a degree through their university was a possibility that would not be guaranteed in the U.S. due to their legal status. They would not have been able to pursue the degrees they are obtaining now, and their access to a college education was the impetus behind them rethinking their shift back to Mexico more positively than before. Their university offered the students a space where they could establish themselves in Mexico and have less animosity toward their parents for leaving the U.S. Through their university, they were able to feel as if they also had available opportunity and a viable future in Mexico than in the past.

Kleyn's (2017) findings from her investigation of transborder high school students in Oaxaca suggests three takeaways. The first is that transborder students' identities can transcend formal conceptions of national identity and pivots on positionality and personal experience living and being excluded in both countries. The second is that how a transborder student loses and learns languages represent their complex journey negotiating their identity. And lastly, her final finding is that transborder students can feel isolated from their peers and that their lack of support places the burden of establishing a sense of belonging on the students themselves. My findings show that Kleyn's themes persist in transborder university students' experiences in college. In agreement with Kleyn's first finding, Rosa, Carolina, Luz and Gabrielle still struggled to establish their identities as not wholly Mexican but also not wholly American despite their nationality. As seen in how they create space in their university for recognition through their work on the project to provide recommendations for the faculty and their efforts to help their peers to combat the stigma

against Mexican-American transborder students, the struggle to be recognized for their unique challenges as transborder students and are seeking to be identified for the unique experiences. As they studied both English and Spanish, they seemed to straddle an ambiguous space where they don't quite lose their linguistic connection to the U.S. yet also immerse themselves into Mexican society through their careers and with their degrees, showing how like Kleyn's (2017) second finding their connection language represents their journey to establish their identities. Lastly, in support of Kleyn's final finding, the students held the responsibility of crafting spaces for their recognition in response to alienation from their professors and the stigma held against transborder university students. The similarities between Kleyn's findings and the findings of this investigation strongly suggests the persistence of the difficulties of being a transborder student across time. Even as students enter college and begin to form life plans in Mexico, two key indicators that may suggest they have surmounted the difficulties of their transborder identities, their efforts to have their identities recognized and their continued struggles in college suggest their identities are still very much in the process of defining themselves as they age and mature.

My investigation's agreement with the scholarly discussions on transborder students goes to show that the difficulties faced by younger students continue to affect university students. However, the investigation can suggest something new that is specific to transborder university students. When considering how transborder students identity operates with a transnational framework or a framework that argues migrants can negotiate and maintain ties to both their sending and receiving countries to create and exchange new forms of identity, I conclude that the students' identity is a new identity that is the product of the recent phenomenon of return migration. The students' efforts to be recognized and identified and their ability to navigate their opportunities using their bilingual and multicultural skills suggests that their identities don't operate in common

categories of nationality. As they maintain ties to the U.S. through language and use their bilingualism to even facilitate visits and academic endeavors in the U.S., their identities represent a unique product of having spent their childhoods abroad and having had to integrate themselves into a new country. This research suggests that this identity will persist. As return migration continues to occur, there will be an increase in a class of students that navigate both worlds and that current assumptions of identity based on nationality will be unsatisfactory in capturing who they are and their unique struggles in college.

Lastly, Stuart Hall's (1996) offers a definition of cultural identity that recognizes the similarities in the identities of individuals, but that continuously changes based on how individuals position themselves within the past. As seen in how the students recontextualized their transition to Mexico based on the opportunities to access higher education, the students continuously rethink and reconsider their existence and life experiences as they encounter new life barriers and opportunities. As transborder students begin to encounter new life opportunities it is highly likely that their opinions and positionality will change. Even as they struggle for social recognition and use their bilingual skills, their identity is still very much in the process of defining itself and recontextualizing where they fit in two worlds.

This project seeks to begin identifying how transborder students who had lived in the U.S. without legal authorization negotiate their multicultural identities at Mexican universities. By conducting eight interviews with four students, my findings sought to identify themes in how students express and manifest their transborder identities at their universities. I identified three main themes in how Rosa, Carolina, Luz, and Gabrielle negotiated their identities: by establishing agency by crafting spaces for social recognition, operationalizing language and transborder skills, and recontextualizing their transition to Mexico. By putting these findings in conversation with

the literature review, my findings would agree that schools represent a legitimating institution in the lives of transborder, university students. Furthermore, when the findings are compared to Kleyn's (2017) research and framed with transnational assimilation theory and Hall's (1996) notion of identity, I make three main conclusions. The first is that the persistence of difficulties underscored by Kleyn in the lives of transborder students show that the difficulties of being a transborder student continue as the students age and mature. Second, is that the students' efforts to have their identities recognized at the university and of operationalizing their bilingualism represent the formation of a new identity that is a product of return migration. Lastly, the identities of transborder students are still continuously changing as they mature and further establish themselves as independent adults.

My findings and conclusion begin to contribute to new literature by beginning to explore how transborder students negotiate their identities and how educators and academics can begin to map how these students cope with the difficulties of their competing multicultural backgrounds. This research, however, only represents the first step in recognizing how transborder students struggle and their everyday experiences. Nevertheless, my investigation and findings present a valuable analysis of transborder students and can serve as a launchpad for future research.

Recommendations for Further Research

This project's findings and conclusions represent the beginning of capturing and comprehending the identity of transborder students. However, there are concrete steps that can be taken in future investigations to improve the results of a similar project. The findings of this investigation were limited to transborder students who were born in Mexico and had lived in the U.S. undocumented. While these students represent an important contingency of transborder

students, they do not represent the experiences of all transborder students. This, on top of having a small sample size, limits the generalizability of my findings. Therefore, for future investigations on how transborder students negotiate their multicultural identities, it is important to expand the sample population of students to include a larger number of students that represent a variety of national backgrounds and citizenship statuses. Moreover, my interviewees all attended the same university in Oaxaca. To make more accurate conclusions that could apply to more generally to transborder students in Mexico, it would be important to capture and compare how their experiences differ across schools and across states.

Nevertheless, investigations with small samples sizes can still make valuable contributions to this topic. Future investigations using anthropological, ethnographic methods aimed at capturing how transborder students negotiate their identities relative to other institutions in addition to their university can serve the role of narrating their unique lived experiences. Rather than using sociological methods, an investigation following how these students navigate other institutions around them can contribute a more nuanced understanding of transborder identity and the additional struggles and benefits that come with having a multicultural background.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide – First Round

General Quick-Answer Questions

1. Tell me about yourself?
 - a. Where are you from?
 - b. What languages do you speak?
 - c. What language do you feel the most comfortable speaking in?
2. Tell me about what you study?
 - a. How did you decide to major in _____?
3. How many years have you lived in Mexico?
 - a. Does most of your family here?
 - b. Have you always lived in Oaxaca?
4. Do you have any other family members living in Oaxaca?
 - a. Where?
 - b. What languages do they speak there?
5. How long did you live in the U.S.?
 - a. Where in the U.S. did you live?
 - b. Any other places?

In-depth, Personal, Longer-Answer Questions

6. What was it like your first few years in Mexico?
7. What was different/ similar?
8. What was your experience with language?
 - a. Friends?
9. How did you adjust to life in Mexico?
10. Did you miss the U.S.?
 - a. Did you ever want to go back?
 - b. Do you still want to go back?
11. Did you feel more Mexican or American in the past?
12. How do you feel now?
 - a. When did that change?
 - b. Why?
13. Do you feel different from your peers?
14. What is it like to attend your university?
 - a. Do you like it?
 - b. Do you feel a sense of belonging?
15. What are your plans in the future?
16. When you hear the term “Mexican culture” what do you think?
17. When you hear the term “American culture” what do you think?
18. What makes each unique?

Guía de entrevistas – Primera ronda

Preguntas generales de respuesta rápida

1. ¿Cuéntame sobre ti?
 - a. ¿De dónde eres?
 - b. ¿En qué idiomas hablas?
 - c. ¿En qué idioma te sientes más cómodo hablando?
2. ¿Cuéntame lo que estudias?
 - a. ¿Cómo decidiste concentrarte en _____?
3. ¿Cuántos años has vivido en México?
 - a. ¿La mayoría de tu familia está aquí?
 - b. ¿Siempre has vivido en Oaxaca?
4. ¿Tiene otros miembros de la familia viviendo en Oaxaca?
 - a. ¿Dónde?
 - b. ¿Qué idiomas hablan allí?
5. ¿Cuánto tiempo viviste en Estados Unidos?
 - a. ¿Dónde viviste en Estados Unidos?
 - b. ¿Algún otro lugar?

Preguntas profundas, personales y de larga respuesta

6. ¿Cómo fueron tus primeros años en México?
7. ¿Qué era diferente/similar?
8. ¿Cuál fue su experiencia con el lenguaje?
 - a. ¿Amigos?
9. ¿Cómo te ajustaste a la vida en México?
10. ¿Extrañaste a los EE. UU.?
 - a. ¿Alguna vez quiso volver?
 - b. ¿Todavía piensas en volver?
11. ¿Te sentiste más mexicano o americano en el pasado?
12. ¿Cómo te sientes ahora?
 - a. ¿Cuándo cambió eso?
 - b. ¿por qué?
13. ¿Te sientes diferente de tus compañeros?
14. ¿Qué se siente al asistir a su universidad?
 - a. ¿Te gusta?
 - b. ¿Te sientes integrado a la comunidad?
15. ¿Cuáles son tus planes en el futuro?
16. Cuando escuchas el término "cultura mexicana", ¿Qué opinas?
17. Cuando escuchas el término "cultura americana", ¿Qué opinas?
18. ¿Qué hace que cada uno sea único?

Appendix B

Interview Guide – Second Round

1. How do people find out you are a "transnational student?"
2. Have you ever felt uncomfortable revealing this information?
3. How was your process to apply to college?
4. Is there a community for transnational students at your university?
 - a. Tell me more about this project?
 - b. What kind of resources are available to students like you?
 - c. What makes the group feel united?
5. Have you always planned to go to college? Did you ever have other plans?
6. Tell me a little more about your family. Did you feel your parents understood the kind of transition you were going through when you came back from America?
 - a. Do you feel different from your parents?
 - b. Can you tell me more about their transition to Mexico?
7. How did you find out you were leaving the United States?
8. What do you want Americans to understand best about migrants?
 - a. What do you think they misunderstand?
9. Are you familiar with "DREAMers?" (If not, explain)
 - a. Do you feel you can relate to the DREAMers experience?
 - b. Why or why not?
 - c. Do you think the DREAMers represent you in any way?
10. What cultural values or trends are the most different between Mexico and the United States?
 - a. Which of these American values or trends are the most positive?
 - i. Negative?
 - b. Which of these Mexican values or tendencies are the most positive?
 - i. Negative?
11. In retrospect, what time different from your time in the United States?

Guía de Entrevistas – Segunda Ronda

1. ¿Cómo se entera la gente que usted/ tu eres un "estudiante transnacional?"
2. ¿Alguna vez se ha sentido incómodo al revelar esta información?
3. ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para aplicar a la Universidad?
4. ¿Hay una comunidad para estudiantes transnacionales en su Universidad?
 - a. ¿Cuéntame más sobre este proyecto?
 - b. ¿Qué tipo de recursos están disponibles para estudiantes como tú?
 - c. ¿Qué los hace sentir unidos?
5. ¿Siempre habías planeado ir a la Universidad? ¿Tenías otros planes?
6. Cuéntame un poco más sobre tu familia. ¿Sentiste que tus padres entendían el tipo de transición por el que estabas atravesando cuando regresaste de Estados Unidos?
 - a. ¿Te sientes diferente a tus padres?
 - b. ¿Puede contarme más sobre su transición a los México?
7. ¿Cómo te enteraste de que te saldrías de los Estados Unidos?
8. ¿Qué desea que los norteamericanos entiendan mejor de los migrantes?
 - a. ¿Qué crees que malentienden?
9. ¿Estás familiarizado con "DREAMers?" (si no saben, explica)
 - a. ¿Sientes que puedes relacionar con la experiencia de DREAMers?
 - b. ¿Por qué o por qué no?
 - c. ¿Crees que los DREAMers te representan de cualquier manera?
10. ¿Qué valores culturales o tendencias son los más diferentes entre México y los Estados Unidos?
 - a. ¿Cuáles de esos valores o tendencias estadounidenses son las más positivas?
 - i. ¿Negativas?
 - b. ¿Cuáles de esos valores o tendencias mexicanas son las más positivas?
 - i. ¿Negativas?
11. En retrospectiva, ¿qué vez diferente de tu tiempo en los Estados Unidos?

Appendix C

Declaración de Propósito y Acta de Consentimiento para Uso de Información (Consent)

Antes que nada, le agradezco mucho el tiempo que usted me dedica el día de hoy _____ para participar en mi proyecto de investigación. Yo soy una estudiante del programa de SIT (Escuela de Estudios Internacionales), mi nombre es Francisco Javier Cernada y vengo de la Universidad de Harvard donde estudio ciencias sociales y economía con un enfoque en migración e incorporación social.

Mi proyecto de investigación tiene como tema central entender la experiencia e identidad personal de alguien como usted, un estudiante universitario transnacional que haya vivido algún parte de su niñez en los Estados Unidos. Con los datos que usted comparta, escribiré un proyecto final de aproximadamente 30 páginas donde describiré como universitarios mexicanos transnacionales negocian su identidad nacional, étnico, y cultural desde el punto de vista de las ciencias sociales. Aunque ha habido muchos estudios sobre los estudiantes transnacionales que han permanecido en los Estados Unidos, hay pocos estudios dedicado a entender la perspectiva de los que han regresado y perseguido su licenciatura en México. La meta de mi investigación es destacar las experiencias de estos estudiantes y ponerlos en discusión con la teoría académico sobre identidad transnacional.

Antes de realizar este proyecto y de entrevistarle, quiero que usted sepa que NO está en obligación alguna de participar. Si decide participar y ser entrevistado, usted puede elegir qué preguntas quiere responder y cuáles no. Además, usted está en todo derecho de terminar su participación en este proyecto en el momento que usted lo desee sin ningún impacto negativo para usted. En esta investigación, su anonimato será asegurado y no compartiré información personal que pueda llevar a identificarlo bajo situación alguna (por ejemplo, usare un alias en vez de su nombre verdadero, y no compartiré detalles como su empleo, etc.). Solamente compartiré su carrera académica y usare un alias para describir la universidad que atiende para poder también destacar como su identidad es reforzado o desafiado por su universidad y como su identidad ha influenciado sus decisiones al respecto a su futuro. De igual forma, si usted lo desea, puedo compartir con usted la información que incluiré en mi investigación, para que usted decida si ésta representa fielmente lo que usted comunicó conmigo. Si usted prefiere que yo, el investigador, NO utilice la información que usted comparta conmigo, parcial o totalmente, durante nuestras reuniones, no hay ningún problema. Sólo tiene que indicarme qué información NO desea que se incluya en mi proyecto final. Hay la posibilidad que utilice estos hallazgos y datos en otros proyectos académicos, pero en ese caso, me contactare con usted para pedir su consentimiento antes de incluirlo. Usted también tiene el derecho de negar el uso de estas entrevistas en otros proyectos.

Esta investigación se llevará a cabo durante un mes. Durante este tiempo, programaré tres entrevistas, dos entrevistas individuales y una entrevista grupal, y cada entrevista durará aproximadamente una hora. Idealmente, programe las dos entrevistas individuales antes de la entrevista grupal. La meta es que se completen las entrevistas antes del 26 de abril. Usted y yo nos pondremos de acuerdo para encontrar las fechas y horas que nos convengan más. Si algún otro compromiso surge, usted podrá cancelar la cita y reprogramarla para otro momento sin ningún problema.

Beneficios

Su experiencia como estudiante transnacional será documentada y otras personas podrán aprender sobre su experiencia negociando su identidad nacional, étnico, y cultural. Su historia de vida puede aportar mucho a quienes desean entender la experiencia de jóvenes que han sido impactados por la migración.

Además, esta investigación va a dar a luz a una experiencia de migrantes desconocido y puede ser útil para los administradores universitarios quienes apoyan a estudiantes transnacionales.

Firma de Consentimiento

Yo, _____ doy consentimiento a la estudiante-investigador Francisco Javier Cernada para que use la información recolectada en esta entrevista siempre y cuando se cumplan las condiciones estipuladas en este documento y se asegure mi anonimato.

La grabación de voz será guardada de manera segura y anónimo. Las entrevistas serán grabados con un teléfono móvil, pero los archivos (de audio y las transcripciones) serán guardados en un USB protegido con una contraseña para asegurar los datos en caso de que perdiera mi teléfono o algo le pasaría a la tecnología que voy a usar para la investigación. No se van a grabar los archivos con información que los pueda identificar.

Doy consentimiento para que esta conversación sea grabada y transcrito:

SI

NO

Firma de la entrevistada que confirma consentimiento

Fecha

Para cualquier duda o comentario después de esta entrevista, mi número de teléfono es:

+1 (713) 857-3110. Me puede hablar, mandar texto, a mandar mensaje por WhatsApp.

Mi correo electrónico es: **fjcernada@college.harvard.edu**

Si desea confirmar o verificar la identidad de la investigadora o si tiene alguna duda sobre este proyecto o la institución que lo respalda, puede contactar al Director Académico de SIT México, Omar Núñez Méndez, cuyo teléfono es 9511194414.

Appendix D

Interview Dates

Student	Date of Interview 1	Date of Interview 2
Rosa	04/23/2019	04/25/2019
Carolina	04/23/2019	04/25/2019
Luz	04/29/2019	05/01/2019
Gabrielle	04/29/2019	05/01/2019