

Transborderism and the Mexico-U.S. Border

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Exploring Transborderism Through the Perspectives of  
Pupils and Students at the Cali-Baja Region

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Mitxy Mabel Meneses Gutiérrez hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 30 September 2021

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores transborderism and its practices at the Cali-Baja region through the perspectives of transborder pupils and students living in Mexico, but attending school in the U.S. This population crossed the Mexico-U.S. border through the land Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. The narratives of documented border crossers, particularly transborder learners, have been missing in the Mexico-U.S. border scholarship. Such invisibility limits our understanding of the region. I claim that transborder practices for academic purposes present challenges with binational implications.

The empirical data was collected through ten months of fieldwork in Mexico and in the state of California. The ethnographic-bend methods included in-depth interviews with twenty-seven former transborder learners, two policymakers in international education, and one scholar in the field of transborderism. The findings reveal the following: (i) the link between a reconfigured American dream and the reasons for becoming a transborder figure via education, (ii) the hardship of crossing the border makes this process the most difficult part of the practice and, (iii) school dynamics do not reflect transborder practices at this region.

The original contributions put forward by this research are three-fold. Theoretically, it contributes to the emerging literature of transborderism in the Mexico-U.S. border by focusing on the practice through the figure of transborder learners. Additionally, a novel inter-city analysis between Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego is put forward discussing the adaptive capacities of transborderism. Empirically, this research reveals specific challenges that transborder learners face affecting their health and academic performances. Politically, a Specific Agreement of Cooperation in Transborder Education between Mexico and California is proposed in support of these learners. Such an Agreement would also contribute to the development of a transborder perspective reflecting the Cali-Baja region reality in binational and multi-level policies.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. Introduction

I come from a space of ambivalence. One that is liminal, the 'in-between', where two countries intersect. I come from the border. To be more exact, I come from the city of Mexicali located in the Cali-Baja region. This region is compounded by the U.S. state of California and the Mexican state of Baja California. In a way, trying to define and understand certain sociopolitical elements of the life in the city where I grew up, a city divided in two by a fence, was the beginning of this research project. Over time, I realised how unique my upbringing in Mexicali was in terms of identity, sense of belonging, and understanding of the local practices. Even the names of the cities symbolise the connection between Mexico and the U.S. The name of Mexicali is a combination of the words, Mexi/co and Cali/ornia. The same applies to the name of the U.S. city on the other side, *el otro lado*, Calexico, Cal/ifornia and M/exico. The city seal of Mexicali includes a dotted line representing the border with the U.S. In Calexico's seal, the Mexican flag is included, along with the legend 'Where California and Mexico Meet'. This is undeniably true, both countries meet, coexist, and cohabit in the Mexicali-Calexico space. In no way does this mean that the region is free of tensions or contradictions. However, such tensions are negotiated daily by the population of these cities, integrating elements from both sides and thus, 'living' the border. To live at this border means to constantly navigate it politically, economically, socially, and culturally. It means knowing two currencies, two languages, two cultures, two idiosyncrasies, two health and education systems. To live in these border cities also imprints on its population a hyperawareness on migration and immigrants, as these sojourners are part of the urban ecology. In other words, it is almost impossible to think of Mexicali and Calexico without considering the border as a determinant and active element of the regional identity.

Since I was a child, I have been living the border in many ways. I remember crossing to Calexico as part of my family routine, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays, to shop for groceries and other goods. This was also shared by most of my friends and family members. Sometimes we would just cross to go to a particular restaurant or to the cinema when movie premiers came to the U.S. first. It is like having options in two countries simultaneously when holding a visa, as long as one is willing to endure the long waiting times to cross the border. It also meant learning and developing at least two ways of behaving, as a Mexican national and a foreigner in the U.S. Such alternation or simultaneity is also reflected in the use of Spanglish commonly used by this border population. Although not everyone in this region speaks English or Spanish, the linguistic influence is palpable in how both languages are mixed and accommodated in Spanglish. I am as comfortable speaking Spanglish as I am crossing back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. In fact, I am more comfortable speaking Spanglish than speaking just in Spanish or in English.

This trait of my identity, among other related to a border city lifestyle, have not always been welcomed by language purists in the interior zones of Mexico or the U.S. My 'Mexicaness' was



considered diluted when living in other cities in Mexico during university. At that time, my friends saw me not as a Mexican – like them – but as a Mexican living in the U.S., or a *pocha*. However, I could see differences between people living at the border and Mexicans living in the U.S. Such a complex understanding is an element of my cross-border identity, in which the border is never entirely transcended but always negotiated. This knowledge is common among some of my friends that had more intense border interactions, as they crossed it daily to attend school in Calexico.

Such 'privileged' information of local cross-border practices became essential for my professional life. For instance, I worked with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) stationed in the Mexicali-Calexico border. The position required a person familiarised with the city's migration nature and the urban layout. This familiarity would help the returnees from the U.S. navigate this zone. At a later stage, I joined the Mexican Secretariat for Public Education, coordinating binational programmes for migrant education with the U.S. These programmes aim to help Mexicans living in the U.S. with their academic journey. For instance, the Binational Program of Migrant Education (PROBEM by its acronym in Spanish) place Mexican teachers in public primary schools in the U.S. for several weeks. These schools would have a high number of Mexican pupils. These pupils are children of Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. The purpose of PROBEM is to help the learners with the transition between education systems. During this time, I realised that no programmes aimed to support pupils and students living in Mexicali but studying in Calexico. As I have experienced my entire life, crossing to the U.S. by car or foot is a demanding practice that can take several hours. This process is mediated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers. These officers can be aggressive at times while crossers endure harsh weather conditions and different types of violence. This daily border dynamic and the challenges experienced inside the schools located in this region, required a policy conversation. However, transborder pupils and students, also referred to as 'learners' throughout this thesis, have not been the main focus when looking at transborderism or its practices. Additionally, these learners have not been included in any Mexican or Mexican-U.S. education programme.

This qualitative investigation explores transborderism and its practices at the Cali-Baja region through the perspectives of transborder pupils and students living in Mexico, but attending school in the U.S. This population crossed the Mexico-U.S. border through the land Ports of Entry (PoE) in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. The experiences of this population provide an account of the challenges they faced during their transborder practices. I claim that transborder practices for academic purposes present challenges with binational implications. In this vein, this thesis proposes the development and signing of a Specific Agreement in Transborder Education between the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education, The California Department of Education and the Regents of the University of California. This instrument would address the challenges of transborder practices for academic purposes at the Cali-Baja region. A Specific Agreement such as this would abide by the current binational framework between Mexico and California, that acknowledges co-responsibility over transnational learners that transit between Mexico and the U.S.

The contributions put forward by this research are threefold and multi-level. On a theoretical level, the thesis furthers the understanding of transborderism by moving the discussion from the abstract into practice. It does so through the historicization of the dynamic, the exploration of its emergence, and by analysing its elements and challenges through four main sites: 'At Home', 'PoE', 'In School', 'Back to the Family Home'. Each of these sites present different types of challenges and are transited by transborder learners every day. It is through the exploration of these sites that this research contributes to the understanding of transborderism and its practices on an empirical level. Although transborder learners have been mentioned in transborder scholarship to a certain extent, limited empirical research has been conducted with a focus on this population. Through the perspectives of this transborder figure, it was possible to analyse the reasons for becoming transborder, safeguarding concerns at the PoE, the development of hacks or counter-pedagogies to navigate a transborder life, and the effects of transborder practices in school dynamics. Moreover, this thesis presents the first inter-city empirical analysis of transborderism within the same region. In other words, the empirical investigation is vertical and horizontal as it includes Mexico and the U.S., and a comparative analysis between Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego.

Lastly, and on a political level, this research explores the policy implications of such a practice and proposes a practical framework for binational cooperation in education. It also proves the feasibility of institutionalising the visibility of these learners through the signing of a Specific Agreement of Cooperation in Transborder Education between Mexican and Californian stakeholders. This instrument would be based on the learners' practices entailing a local, regional, and binational effort. In this vein, this multi-sited thesis is located in the intersections of cultural, social, and political fields. Therefore, a hierarchisation of the problems to be discussed is essential. First, transborderism and its emergence are analysed as a fundamental aspect of the border condition when looking at the Cali-Baja region. Transborder practices are best analysed through the narratives of pupils and students at formative ages, as they transit several spaces that are border oriented. Such accounts of their bodily transborder dynamic will show the complexity of transborderism and the challenges they faced when going to school, which, for most children and young adults, does not require crossing a highly surveilled international border. After understanding the difficulties and peculiarities of transborderism, its practices and politicisation, the data will be discussed within the realm of education. It will be done so by analysing some of the problems related to the academic and pedagogical practices experienced by these transborder learners. The thesis reflects on language barriers, nationalist pedagogies, the presence of immigration officers inside schools, and school practices that do not reflect the transborder reality of the region. Lastly, the absence of binational programmes directed to this population will be addressed through the proposal of an instrument of cooperation, informed by the empirical data gathered. An idea such as this stands in contrast to the traditional border policy conception based mainly on quantitative data, failing to depict the heterogeneity of practices that constitute the transborder fabric.

The present chapter aims to introduce the research by first establishing the disciplinary loci of this investigation, and the theoretical ground to (re)think the Cali-Baja region through transborderism. Transborder pupils and students are then presented as the case of study arguing for the importance of their perspectives when researching transborderism, and the Mexico-U.S. border. A brief set of initial empirical observations that influenced the development of the research are also presented. The research questions that guided this investigation are introduced at the end of the chapters, as well as the structure of the thesis.

## II. Disciplinary Loci

This is a politics and policy-oriented research project. As such, it engages mainly with three different but overlapping bodies of literature: Mexico-U.S. border scholarship, Critical Border Studies and, Transnational and Transborder Education policies. The study of transborderism through the student's figure in its geographical, spatial, and political condition, required an intense interdisciplinary effort. In this sense, the choice of literature critically addressed understandings of the Mexico-U.S. border and transborderism at the Cali-Baja region. Furthermore, most of the texts and scholars discussed in this work speak directly from the Mexico-U.S. border as they are situated in this location. The decision to focus on this body of literature emphasises the importance of speaking about this border directly from this geographical location, from within. Such a narrative is present throughout this work and through different elements. For instance, during the in-person interviews, most of the participants spoke in Spanglish, which is characteristic of the region. Additionally, the texts analysed in this work were in Spanish or English.

The thesis first discusses the Mexico-U.S. border live connection through the Cali-Baja region, tracing the history and emergence of transborderism and its practices. For this endeavour, the literature that stemmed from the Mexico-U.S. border scholarship engages with the social and the political configurations of the Cali-Baja region. The social and political dimensions are analysed since the establishment of the border in 1854 to 2019. This body of work is situated in the fields of history, anthropology, cultural studies, social and political sciences. In particular, discussions on qualitative transnationalism and transborderism are prominent. This qualitative approach stands in contrast to the myriad of texts based on quantitative accounts characteristic when discussing the Mexico-U.S. border.

Moreover, the literature in this research considers the impact of political and immigration policies on the local, social, and political life at the Cali-Baja region. Furthermore, some of the texts draw from Chicana and Chicano Studies engaging in particular with the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, such as *Borderlands/La Frontera*. They do so by analysing political and social realignments in part motivated by '*la herida abierta*'. Through the dialogue of the chosen literature and transnationalism, it was possible to analyse the history of transborderism, its contemporary practices, and the emergence of pupils and students as transborder figures at the Cali-Baja region.

The contribution to the theorisation of transborderism through the perspectives of transborder learners continues in the second part of the thesis.

The second part of the thesis presents the empirical research, analysis, and observations of transborder practices of transborder learners in the Cali-Baja region. The approach employed in this endeavour is situated within the critical analysis of borders. The approach of Critical Border Studies (CBS) helped to understand the border's multiple dimensions by considering epistemology, ontology, and spatial-temporality as analytical points to discuss border politics. Although CBS is not the first approach to re-think borders through the subjectivities of the crossers since it has been done by various scholars (Balibar, E., 2002; Mezzadra, S., and Neilson, B., 2013; Iglesias, N., 2015), it emphasizes the focus on bordering practices by adding the element of performance to the analysis. In other words, CBS looks at the numerous practices occurring concerning the border and its rituals through a phenomenological approach (Parker, N. and Vaughan-Williams, N. 2012).

In this sense, Critical Border Studies underscores the importance of developing a paradigm of border politics that looks at the everyday activities and how these are consciously performed. Such an approach is relevant to this research as it allows us to look at transborderism as a practice. In this vein, the practices are performed, influencing transborder identities and coping mechanisms needed to navigate challenging spaces. The CBS influence is observable, particularly when analysing the lived and practiced border through the participants' phenomenology accounts. However, this research does not consider the call by CBS to deterritorialize border epistemologies, as it argues that keeping borders geographically and territorially bounded limits its analysis in impalpable sites. Some of these sites are biometric identification regimes and mobility tracking technologies (Parker, N., and Vaughan-Williams, N., 2009).

The valuable claim does contribute to the analysis of border-oriented policies in intangible sites, mainly in European borders inside the Schengen Area. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the risks posed by deterritorialization in particular when only focusing on exported, symbolic, and metaphorical borders. The main risk is overlooking complex local border practices, as was the case for transborderism in the Cali-Baja region prior to the 1990s. Such a warning is also present in some of the texts within the Mexico-U.S. border scholarship. However, this thesis recognises the valuable contributions of deterritorialised analyses to the theorisation of transborderism. In this sense, CBS's overall approach is complemented and put into dialogue with Mexico-U.S. border scholarship literature. This is done in particular when discussing the American dream, state policies, and cognate data.

The last body of work that guided the final part of the thesis is situated in the policy literature on transnational and transborder education, specifically between Mexico and the U.S. It does so by engaging with texts located in the fields of transnational education, transborder pedagogy, and public policy. This thesis particularly analyses these areas in the Cali-Baja region context, emphasising the challenges transborder learners experience in school. These challenges include nationalist and monolingual pedagogies. Moreover, the literature regarding policy focuses on the existing binational

framework of cooperation in education between Mexico and California. It does so by analysing the binational programmes for transnational pupils transiting between the Mexican and U.S. education systems. The thesis concludes by proposing a practical instrument of cooperation in transborder education connecting the original empirical data gathered with the current binational framework in transnational education. To bridge academic and policy dialogues is one of the overall goals of the present research.

### **III. Rethinking the Mexico-U.S. Border Through the Cali-Baja Region: Transnationalism and the case for Transborderism**

The Mexico-U.S. border is one of the most topical borders in the world. Famous for being highly crossed and trespassed, this border has attracted the attention of researchers, artists, and politicians. Since the beginning of its establishment in 1848, this border has been primarily considered a hard-line of geopolitical separation, characterised by its migration and deportation regime. The fact that it is one of the most crossed borders, with millions of documented crossings (U.S. CBP, 2019), usually gets lost in the vast production of Mexico-U.S. scholarship concerned with the hardship of undocumented crossings. Furthermore, quantitative data on legal and illegal crossings lie at the centre of state border policies, albeit the latter dominates most of the political narratives and decisions. In the same vein, qualitative information continues to be primarily related to the experiences of illegal crossings. In any case, the intrinsic exclusionary vocation of the Mexico-U.S. border has characterised its understanding. Nevertheless, more critical approaches have emerged in the last decades to further its analysis.

Oscar Martínez (1994) and Juan Carlos Arriaga (2010) concurred that a border could be conceived in two different ways. Oscar Martínez defines the border as a 'line that separates one nation from another or, in the case of internal entities, one province or locality from another' (1994:15). In the same sense, Arriaga states that it is the mere limit between two states where their interactions can be observed (Arriaga, J., 2010). This one-dimensional understanding of the border as a line of separation is still present in the discussions and practices at the Mexico-U.S. border, legitimating intransigent policies and its deportation regime. Such harsh immigration and border policies began in the Cali-Baja region with the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper<sup>1</sup> in 1994, establishing the fences and walls that separate Mexico and the U.S. today. After the terrorist attacks of 2001, immigration and border policies were absorbed by the U.S. national security continuum (Vaughan-Williams, N., 2010). In other words, the narrative of national security reproduced the idea that U.S. domestic safety and security was dependant, in part, on the level of border protection. Donald Trump's presidency and the construction of 'the wall' is the latest example of a simplistic and reductionist view of this border.

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<sup>1</sup> Further information and analysis of Operation Gatekeeper and other immigration policies are discussed in Chapter I of this research.

Sam Nunberg and Roger Jason Stone Jr. are widely known for their involvement with Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. Even though Nunberg and Stone were only political advisers of President Donald Trump from 2014 to 2015, their ideas still resonate. They decided that stricter immigration policies should be the main statement of President Trump's campaign. Nunberg and Stone faced the problem of working with an unorthodox candidate. Donald Trump did not like to read or follow scripts, but to praise his own capabilities as a builder came rather naturally. Taking that into consideration, then the question was, how do we get Donald Trump to continue speaking about more rigid immigration policies? Nunberg and Stone figured a mnemonic device that joined migration and Trump's love for construction, and the idea to build a wall paid for by Mexico was conceived. 'Build the wall!' became the characteristic chant during Trump's campaign (Hirschfeld, J., and Baker, P., 2019).

To build an actual wall at the Mexico-U.S. border became one of Trump's campaign promises. He assured U.S. citizens it would stop illegal migration and drug trafficking. Such a notion is highly problematic for many reasons. For instance, he linked drug trafficking with immigrants of colour, affecting and influencing the political environment as these immigrants are perceived as harmful and undeserving. Also, by enhancing and fortifying the border capability for separation, he showed ignorance regarding the Mexico-U.S. interdependency in various fields such as trade, economy, and social dynamics. Moreover, it caused disruptions in the U.S. House of Representatives over budget allocation for the wall construction. It is clear then that the border is not just a line of demarcation but a space for policy agglomeration produced by central governments, influencing the creation of multi-level interlinks and processes of interdependency (Brunnet-Jailly, E., 2011).

Aligned with such interlinks and processes, it is pertinent to discuss the second conception of the border proposed by Martínez (1994) and Arriaga (2010). Both scholars analysed the contiguous 'border regions' or what Martínez denominates 'borderland' defined as 'a region that lies adjacent to a border' (Martínez, O., 1994:15), where political, cultural, economic, and other processes take place and are observed (Arriaga, 2010). Such processes taking place at the border include a myriad of bodily experiences of daily crossings with the potential of influencing political dimensions. Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999) claim that 'the anthropological study of the everyday lives of the border communities is simultaneously the study of the daily life of the state, whose agents must take an active role in the implementation of policy and the intrusion of the state's structures into people's lives' (Donnan, H., Wilson, T., 1999:4).

The complex interplay of state policies and local dynamics, influence the cultural, political, and economic processes that characterise Mexico-U.S. borderlands (Vila, P., 2000, Iglesias Prieto, N., 2015). In this sense, the emergence of a Cali-Baja region problematizes a reductionist understanding of the border. First, it calls to think about border processes from a regional understanding and not from a national perspective. By doing so, the region becomes more complex as local practices reflect the interconnectedness between California and Baja California, that manifest in social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions.

Since the 1980s, the Mexican-U.S. border has been referred to as a binational region based on the numerous fields through which the border is connected (Bustamante, J., 1981, 1989, Fernández, R., 1989, Ganster, P. & Valenciano, E., 1992). The term 'twin cities' has been used when referring to Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego (Gildersleeve, C., 1979, Kearney, M. and Knopp, A., 1995). Concurring with an Aljazeera article published in 2015, Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego resemble more closely 'non-identical twin cities', which is more allusive to their 'sisterhood'. In 2011, the Cali-Baja Bi-National Mega-Region was established as part of the initiative by a non-profit binational consortium of economic development organisations. The consortium's purpose was to bring together businesses, civic, and government leaders of the region (CaliBaja.net, 2018).

The term Cali-Baja region was also used during the first Binational Week of Education of the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education in the U.S. (DGRI, 2018). During this week, the challenges of transnational students were discussed and addressed. The different fields that look at the California and Baja California border as a region acknowledge local practices beyond the illegal crossings that concerned both countries. Thus, calling for coordinated actions. Such practices then take place in a space where circular processes occurring across both countries can emerge beyond the border. In this vein, to analyse transnationalism is relevant for this research as it contributes to the further understanding of transborderism.

The scholarly discussion of the Mexico-U.S. border has been transitioning from a static line of demarcation (Martinez, O., 1994; Arriaga, J., 2010) to a polysemy space filled with symbolic representations and intersubjectivities (Balibar, E., 2002, Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B., 2013, Iglesias, N., 2015). The deterritorialization of the border enabled the emergence of a metaphorical approach (Anzaldúa, G., 1987) that helped with the study of transnationalism and transnational practices of diasporas in the U.S. (Glick, N., Basch, L., and Szanton, C., 1995, Portes, A., DeWind, J., 2006). Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1995) contributed to the development of transnationalism by looking at the processes of adaptability of low-income Latin America and Caribbean immigrants in host countries. They claim that immigrants remain connected to their home countries to mitigate racism and other inequalities they experience in the host country. In this vein, Alejandro Portes and Josh DeWind (2006) defined transnationalism as 'an image of an unstoppable movement that goes back and forth, allowing them to maintain their presence on both societies and cultures, taking advantage of the economic and political opportunities of this dual life' (Portes, A., DeWind, J., 2006:13). In this sense, the deterritorialization of border crossing practices contributed to the development of a metaphorical approach, transferring the border across dimensions such as identity and gender.

To this regard, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) in her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: La Nueva Mestiza*, argues that: 'The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of

an unnatural boundary' (Anzaldúa, G.,1987:3). This third country exists in a state of *nepantla* understood as the space 'in-between', liminal. In this sense, a *nepantla* perspective is developed by these borderlands' inhabitants from the cracks (Keating, A., 2005). Furthermore, this perspective allows for the deconstruction and reconstruction of identities that interact in spaces where exclusionary border practices are pervasively echoed. In particular referring to race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientations (Anzaldúa, G.,1987). It is in this sense that the metaphorical border is incorporated into the identities of latinas and latinos living in the U.S., as they continue suffering discrimination.

However, Pablo Vila (2003) argues that the notion and concept of the border that began with the study of the Mexico-U.S. geopolitical delimitations have shifted away into other fields of study having an homogenizing effect on borders. He claims these have been transformed, by mostly cultural studies, into a mere boundary applied whenever delimitations are involved (Vila, P., 2003). Joseph Heyman(2017) also emphasizes that 'the border discourse became "unplaced," losing its roots in regional historical formations and sociocultural processes' (Heyman, J., 2017:4). As a consequence, it became disconnected from its ecologies and dilemmas. Nancy Naples states that such concerns are mainly a consequence of interdisciplinary practices (Naples, N., 2010). Nevertheless, this metaphorical approach continues to be relevant for this research as it is concerned with the reconfiguration of identities.

In this sense, transnationalism and transnational practices are linked to personal, community, national, and international structures that interact with various actors. Such a transnational perspective contributes to identity formation and adaptation depending on the economic, cultural, social, and political conditions. However, researchers were initially interested in transnational practices in immigrant's organisations, clubs, and enterprises, without looking at transnational practices from more private spheres (De la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018).

Portes and DeWind (2006) discussed how transnationalism was mainly analysed through an immigration lens, demonstrating that transnational relations required a process of adaptation and transculturation before commencing. Steven Vertovec (2006) argues that the effect of transnational connections can truly affect social structures. In this sense, traditional quantitative approaches to transnationalism can reflect social, cultural, and economic changes on the home community when conglomerated. These are observed through the travel speed of remittances, the local use of such remittances, and the immigrants travel frequency to the home country. In other words, a quantitative approach to transnational interactions derived from qualitative implications (Landolt, P., 2001). Vertovec (2006), based on Sahin (1999), Kyle (2000), and Levitt (2001), assessed that these qualitative changes of social structures and set of values, could affect localities, cities, and even regions.

In this vein and continuing with Vertovec (2006), transnational relations affect at least three different aspects: sociocultural (bifocality), political (identities-structures), and economic (modification of financial institutions). To understand how bifocality builds among immigrants and home localities, is important to consider the 'transnational habitus' that practices and codes of



behaviours generate. Luis Guarnizo (1997), expanding Bourdieu's idea of habitus, states that transnational practices are based on immigrants' double dispositions to react differently depending on specific scenarios. Additionally, bifocality can be generationally transferred to first and second generations of immigrants in the host country. This is present especially in the inherited ways of being and belonging based on the parents or grandparents set of norms. For first or second generation immigrants, status and social class determine the development of the host country as they are political agents (Vertovec, S., 2006). Therefore, bifocality is a transnational practice 'from below' (Smith, M. and Guarnizo, L., 1998), referring to local responses and dynamics with global impacts, including mechanisms of resistance against subordination (De la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018). The political dimension reflects the effects of transnational practices on transnational subjects' identities, and the structures in which they interact. In the context of the Cali-Baja region and in the words of Carlos Monsiváis a '*chicanización de las comunidades*' occurred (Carlos Monsiváis in Castañeda, J., 1993:35). This *chicanización* refers to the influence that Mexican culture has had on California's culture and identity. In this same way, California's culture has also influenced Mexico. In the words of Jorge Castañeda, 'Mexican immigration to California has a 'blowback' cultural effect on Mexico' (Castañeda, J., 1993:36). Some studies have shown how small towns have been transformed by immigrants' returns, modifying some of their clothing by using certain sports brands and conducting a middle-class lifestyle (Castañeda, J., 1993).

As for the transnational economic scope, remittances are key for transformation processes being a quantifiable tie to the home country. Additional dimensions of economic transnationalism are the network of ethno-enterprises (Portes, A., Haller, W. and Guarnizo, L., 2002), and governmental programmes designed to attract diaspora members to invest in home communities. Nevertheless, literature still focuses mainly on the measurement of remittances: volume, origin, destiny, gender of the senders and receivers of remittances, and the social and economic impacts on the society of origin (Vertovec, S., 2000). On a minor scale, there is also interest in this money's productive investment in fields like education and health (Stalker, P., 2000).

Additionally, the technologization of transnational practices contributed to deepening the relations between host and home communities (Smith, M. and Guarnizo, L., 1998, Portes, A., Guarnizo, L., and Landolt, P., 1999, De la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018). Technologies are space and time compressing (Harvey, D., 1990) via instant messaging and video chats (De la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018). Furthermore, a sense of simultaneity is developed and captured by incorporating 'daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally' (Levitt, P. and Schiller, G., 2004:1003). Levitt and Schiller (2004) argue that the notion of simultaneity is then intrinsic and essential to transnationalism, 'the experience of living simultaneously within and beyond the boundaries of a nation-state' (Levitt, P. and Schiller, G., 2004:1006).

This notion of simultaneity, intrinsic in transnational practices and lately enhanced by technology, is critical for further research on practices overarched by transnationalism. Such is the case for transborderism at the Cali-Baja border. Transborder people also experience simultaneity and bifocality as they conduct daily activities across Mexico and the U.S. Although transnationalism remains deterritorialized as there is no need for literal border crossings, transborderism engages with the practice from a territorialized perspective. In other words, transborderism incorporates into its analysis the effects that the international border has on the lives of those that bodily cross it to conduct in-depth activities on both sides. Therefore, the border is bodily lived, influencing the cultural, social, political, and economic spheres of border crossers. It is in this sense that elements such as simultaneity and bifocality help us to understand Cali-Baja transborder practices, identities, paradigms, and performances, as these are not limited to a single nation-state.

However, transborderism adds an element to this analysis concerning the effects of intense bodily border crossings. By doing so, the transnational, symbolic, and metaphorical Mexico-U.S. border gets reterritorialized and understood by the local practices from the Cali-Baja region. As Sergio Chávez (2016) argues: 'To live in the borderlands and to negotiate its boundaries means having two cell phones – one for engaging in transactions in each country – being bilingual and bicultural, knowing how to count change in dollars and pesos, having friends with ties to Mexico and the United States' (Chávez, S., 2016:9). In contrast to those at the interior zones, borderlanders require adaptability and versatility since they transit several universes (Martínez, O., 1994). This is especially true for transborder subjects.

Iglesias Prieto (2011) defines transborderism as 'the frequency, intensity, directionality, and scale of crossing activities; the type of material and symbolic exchanges; and the social and cultural meanings attached to the interactions' (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2011:143). The first part of the definition refers to the practices that include crossing the geopolitical border, and the latter refers to the sociocultural processes that result from such practices. The tandem analysis helps to understand the life dynamic of transborder population. The constant navigation between California and Baja California entails the immersion in different sets of sociocultural and political fields. Particularly after the 1990s, the development of literature on transborderism was influenced by Nestor García Canclini's work on cultural hybridity in Tijuana. The notion of cultural hybridity to describe Tijuana set the tone to discuss transborderism and transborder practices. However, it was not the first time the Mexico-U.S. border was referred to as a hybrid region.

In the decade of 1930, José Vasconcelos, a leader of the Mexican Revolution, used the term hybridity when referring to Nogales city. He considered this a place where the notion of American and Mexican as two separate figures is absurd. This idea and understanding from Vasconcelos stemmed from his transborder experience as a transborder student attending school in Eagle Pass, Texas (Arreola, D. and Curtis, J., 1993). Decades later, Nestor García Canclini (1990) defined cultural hybridity as a 'socio-cultural process in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in a separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices' (García, N., 1989: xxv). In his work '*Culturas Híbridas*', in which Tijuana was defined as a postmodern laboratory,

García studied cultural intersections between tradition and modernity that define the differences between nations and classes. His analysis accentuated processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. García's highly influential work 'institutionalised' the understanding of the Mexico-U.S. border as a space of postmodern hybridity. However, by focusing only on certain cosmetic cultural elements (for instance, speaking in English on Mexican touristic sides), García Canclini failed at problematising the asymmetries, tensions, and colonial genealogies. As a result, he provided an aesthetic model for the analysis of the complexities of the region (Yépez, H., 2010). Nevertheless, the notion of cultural hybridity, sometimes understood as a cultural merge or fusion, contributed to the further analysis of Tijuana from a transborder and nuanced perspective influencing different disciplines.

From the discipline of urbanism, Keith Pezzoli, Richard Marciano and Ilya Zazkavsky (2001) argued that the 'Transborder City-Region' of Tijuana-San Diego has problems in common such as extensive urban growth, fragmented infrastructures, and unequal development. Thus, urban planning has to be done in conjunction. However, this transborder or interconnected perception of the border was not deeply concerned with local human practices and subjectivities. These were assumed as part of the whole interdependent dynamic that included a circular exchange of goods.

From a sociocultural geography dimension, authors such as Michael Dear and Gustavo Leclerc (2003) claim that social interactions on both sides of the border inevitably lead to integration. The level of integration was defined by 'Hard Border Processes' including globalisation, network society, hybridity and privatisation of a region that scholars denominated as 'Bajalta California'. Moreover, 'Soft Border Processes' refer to the perception of one united transborder community, a 'Third Nation' (Dear, M. 2013), one that is imagined echoing Benedict Anderson (1983), and not limited by the physical artificial border.

Tito Alegría (2015) claims that the imagined transborder community of Dear and Leclerc (2003) wrongfully mixes integration and interaction processes. In doing so, some elements are missing in the analysis. Therefore, Alegría speaks separately of a transborder society and a transborder metropolis. The first concept focuses on social processes across the border, and the latter integrates different elements such as urban layout, infrastructure, shared goods, and environmental issues. Either way, Alegría claims that as long as social and economic development are asymmetrical between twin cities, the integration of a transborder society or metropolis is not possible.

In contrast, Iglesias Prieto (2011) claims there is a factual exercise of transborderism in this region. However, border populations experience transborder interactions in different scales of intensity or frequency, referring to such as borderisms. She argues for the existence of four types of borderisms going from normalising the border as a line of division to most intense interactions that consider and understand the border as a third condition (Iglesias Prieto, N. 2011, 2015). Moreover, borderisms can overlap. Within each borderism, there are particular positionalities regarding 'the other' and 'the other side'. Such positionality will depend on the specific activities, interactions, and frequency of bodily border crossings of each subject (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2018).

The first borderism is denominated the 'Non-Border', characterised by disregarding the region's

geopolitical reality. The notion that Mexico and the U.S. are two different and entirely separated political entities is stressed. Those under this approach conduct daily activities without acknowledging the impacts of the geopolitical border and its importance. This is the case for U.S. residents in California with no close relation to the Mexican side. They are more likely to belong to higher economic classes.

The second borderism is the 'Border' that portrays an urban and social identity of the city, acknowledging the influence and importance of the geopolitical border. People in the border borderism are both able or unable to cross the border. Nevertheless, they perceive an inextricable historical link and interdependence between the two adjacent cities. For instance, commercial or business interactions operate acknowledging the benefits of the geopolitical border. The exchanges are rudimentary without the need for an in-depth understanding of sociocultural norms of behaviour, or of the urban landscape on 'the other side'.

The third borderism is the 'Binational' that recognizes 'the other side' as part of the personal and professional lifestyle based on two principles: i) the border represents an opportunity to promote regulated circulation between both cities including economic and sociocultural benefits and, ii) to encourage cooperation and co-responsibility over shared issues that require coordinated action. This borderism also identifies sociocultural opportunities and participation on both sides. Emotional relations are also included in this approach.

Furthermore, the fourth borderism is the 'Transborder' that perceives an integrated space composed by both sides of the border, including its conflicts and tensions. People under this category have deep, intense, emotional, and engaged relationships across border cities. Such sociocultural flexibility stems from dual experiences and a series of simultaneous activities regarding personal and professional life. Strong personal ties to both sides make them bicultural/multicultural and bilingual. Transborderers hold the most complex understanding of the border including the dynamics of both communities, conflicts, and integration. By defying the geopolitical border's binary notion of inclusion or exclusion, and the traditional conceptions of state sovereignty, transborderers create a third space in which they can move with sociocultural freedom (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2018).

Laura Velasco and Oscar Contreras (2014) also analysed border crossing experiences and the sociocultural effect on the local population at the Mexico-U.S. border. The authors engaged with previous questions raised by Michael Kearney in 2008 that approached the geopolitical border from an anthropological perspective, putting forward the influence that identity, border, and order, have on each other. Velasco and Contreras also developed a typology that presents the various ways of experiencing the border: i) The Uncrossed Border, ii) The Border as Background, iii) The Everyday Border, iv) The Boundary Transposed, and, v) The Interstitial Border. These typologies present some similarities and differences with the aforementioned borderisms by Iglesias Prieto.

The main differences are observed in The Boundary Transposed and Interstitial Border categories as they are concerned with transnational experiences and deportation. In contrast, the similarities concentrate on the comparison between the Transborder Borderism and The Everyday Border. The analysis put forward by Velasco and Contreras focused on work-related border crossings including illegal occupations. These types of interactions can be limited and would not necessarily make this population bilingual nor multicultural. They would, however, acquire a complex understanding of the border and practices without approaching it as an integrated space. Nevertheless, these typologies also contribute to a deeper understanding of the regional dynamics and the way the geopolitical border influences livelihoods.

The Everyday Border refers to life experiences articulated via border crossings. Under this category, border crossings can be documented or undocumented. The Everyday Border encompasses different occupation experiences that required adaptive capacities, as this population constantly transit through different sociocultural norms and languages. Moreover, an appreciation for both sides of the border is instrumental for their livelihood. Transborder pupils and students belong to this category. However, they were not included as part of the analysis by Velasco and Contreras. Lastly, the Boundary Transposed category refers to the border that was left behind, that is, Mexico. These experiences come from those living in the United States and of Mexican origin, such as second-generation immigrants. Mexican sociocultural norms still prevail in their households but are mixed with newly acquired 'better values'. The parents' figure in these circumstances is important as they represent Mexico's positive values while including the hardship of a Mexican life in the narratives. Another contribution to the theorisation of transborderism was made by José Manuel Valenzuela (2014). In '*Transfronteras y Límites Liminales*', he discussed some elements that would help interpret the geopolitical, symbolic, and metaphorical borders. Valenzuela's work proposes different dimensions to analyse various processes in this region. In this text, Valenzuela presents the following conditions and characteristics to understand the border: i) conjunctive, ii) disjunctive, iii) connective, iv) imposition, v) interstices and transborder habitus, vi) generative, vii) cultural switch, viii) cultural hybridity, ix) acculturations, and, x) transacculturations.

The most relevant dimension for this research is what Valenzuela refers to as 'Interstices and Transborder Habitus'. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of camps and habitus, Valenzuela's transborder habitus refers to the structures that create systems of understanding stemming from practices conducted on both sides of the border such as studying, working, and shopping. Furthermore, this habitus creates collective lifestyle or routines shared by specific groups partaking in cross-border practices, which develop cultural understandings and expressions only understandable from this transborder dimension. In this sense, Valenzuela proposes transborder scopes referring to the processes that involve the people in transborder camps and habitus. Transborder scopes also include socialised power structures and capitals in a Bourdieusian sense. Moreover, transborder scopes are signifiers where normalised and socialised transborder

structures, involving both sides of the border, coexist with expressions of resistances. These structures could only be understood from a transborder perspective, from within. Drawing from Lefebvre (1991), Valenzuela's transborder scopes stemmed from the lived and practiced border, the everyday experiences, emotions, and collective understandings. In this sense, transborderism refers to the personal, social, cultural, and political processes occurring across both sides of the border that could only be understood from within. However, transborder approaches have been challenged in recent years (Yépez, H., 2018, Alegría, T., 2015).

Heriberto Yépez (2019) claims that to think of transborderism is to speak of utopia. His argument is centred on the links between cultural hybridity by García Canclini and transborderism. Yépez claims that transborder approaches failed to break free from inherited notions of border continuity, or homogeneity, placed by the postmodern hybridity conception of the Mexico-U.S. border. Such border continuity, Yépez argues, misses at least the different economic and political realities quantitatively evidenced of the region. Furthermore, postmodern cultural hybridity only exists within globalist understandings disregarding non-globalist narratives. As a consequence, the agency of border population is reduced (Yépez, H. 2018). In this sense, Yépez calls for post-transborderism positing emphasis on the differences of adjacent cities and communities. Such a call came from the increasing harsh border policies and the political environment, particularly after the 2001 terrorist attacks, that deepened Mexico-U.S. fissures (Yépez, H., 2019).

However, the post-transborder approach of Yépez seems to fail to look at the nuanced and critical understandings of the border that transborder approaches present. This is visible when considering cultural hybridity and transborderism as interchangeable terms. His critiques focus mainly on the neo-colonial genealogies of cultural hybridity, missing the differences between both approaches. For instance, transborderism as understood by Iglesias Prieto (2011) includes the tensions and contradictions present in the cultural, social, and political identities, and practices. These are critically analysed. A transborder integrated space is not homogenous, not a comfortable one, but rather a contested site where integration relates to border practices as part of people's identities and realities. Such practices help transborder people navigate the border, perform it, and make sense of the geopolitical border's influence.

Furthermore, a post-transborderism approach views systems as delimited and in continual divergence, missing valuable intersections, particularly made by some subsystems such as education. One example is the existence of grassroots initiatives in education in the Cali-Baja region, such as the Excellence and Justice in Education (EJE) organisation founded by members of the Hispanic community, and based in El Cajon, California. The objective was for parents on both sides of the border to collaborate and increase parental involvement in their children's school located in the U.S. The programme had positive and quantifiable results. Another example is the Transfronterizo Alliance Student Organization (TASO), supported by the San Diego State University (Kada, K., Kiy, R., 2004). TASO is a student-led initiative based in Tijuana-San Diego that supports transborder students through different programmes that include mentoring, academic staff training, and advocacy for transborder students' institutional visibility. Their successful initiative influenced

more inclusive school policies that consider the dynamics of students living in Tijuana, and their particular challenges.

A third example is located in the University of Texas in Austin, where transborder students living on the Mexican side pay institutional fees as residents (SEP, 2017). These examples show the geopolitical border's influence on local practices, the different challenges to overcome, and effective integrated solutions that helped to navigate this border region. Moreover, the impact of such bottom-up efforts can modify overarching state systems to create a more articulated binational dialogue with coordinated transborder actions.

In this context, transborderism is the theoretical locus for this research that looks at its practices as epistemologically valuable in deepening our critical understanding of the Cali-Baja region. Furthermore, looking at transborder practices through the figure of transborder pupils and students, reflect the pressing challenges derived from this dynamic, that would contribute to the theorisation of transborderism and inform policy responses.

The literature mentioned above stresses the constant interplay of the geopolitical, social, and cultural dimensions of transborderism. In other words, transborderism transits from its geographical ground to the cultural dimension influencing identity formation that subsequently determine particular sociopolitical practices. Thus, transborderism allows us to see the relationship between the territorialised border, the body, and the consciousness. In this vein, the border is understood as a practice palpable, for instance, in the daily experiences of transborder pupils and students in the Cali-Baja region.

#### **IV. Transborderism: Pupils and Students at the Cali-Baja Border**

The research of transborderism through pupils and students' daily experiences at the Cali-Baja region is important for the following reasons. First, such transborder practice contributes to the further theorisation of transborderism by emphasising education's role as an important catalyser for transborder practices throughout the 1900s. Such an approach posits attention to the influence of transborder dynamics, adapted border performances, and complex context understandings. The analysis of such influence is relevant especially when such practices are conducted during formative stages. Thus, through the figure of the transborder pupil and student, it is possible to navigate different sites relevant for understanding the complexities of transborderism, and detecting pressing challenges experienced in such spaces.

Moreover, the critical and empirical information of transborder practices for academic purposes helps with political recognition. It does so by contributing to the transborder subject's visibility, socio-political consistency, and policy implications. To this regard, it is possible to develop a binational cooperation framework between Mexico and California to recognize and address transborder practices. In this vein, transborder pupils and students are the best possible laboratory for thinking innovative public policies and new political understandings of transborderism.

As stated previously, daily practices and challenges should inform further theorisation of transborderism and its policy implications. To clarify, pupils are young learners in pre-college education, and students are young adults in higher education. The term learners in this research encompasses both demographic population, pupils, and students. In this context, it is essential to understand the complexities of the figure of a transborder pupil and student. For instance, they cross the Mexico-U.S. border for academic purposes twice a day in most cases. In other words, they live on the Mexican side and cross the border back and forth to attend school in the U.S., or vice versa. Some of them began a transborder journey at the age of five or six years old, and others became transborder at a later stage. They partake in such a dynamic by holding a passport or a student visa. Many of them cross the border as unaccompanied minors which is highly problematic due to safeguarding implications that will be discussed further in this research.



Map 1. Cali-Baja Transborder region. The territory circled shows the Cali-Baja region and the set of twin cities Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. The transborder region along the Mexico-U.S. border is shown within the dotted lines. (Source: Water Resources Research Center, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cooperative Extension).

Moreover, approximately 78% of transborder pupils and students are binational, holding Mexican and U.S. nationalities (Calva, L., 2016). Consequently, the visibility, safeguarding, and wellbeing of this population should be of binational concern. However, transborder pupils and students are rarely considered when looking at this border region, including in the national census of both countries. It is a challenging endeavour to get updated quantitative and qualitative data on this population. In 2015, around 41,905 transborder students resided in Mexico and studied in the U.S., most of them located in Baja California (16,287), followed by Chihuahua (9,319), Sonora (6,728), Tamaulipas (6,508), Coahuila (2,058), and Nuevo León (less than 1,000).

The Cali-Baja region is a highly relevant space to look at and analyse transborderism and its practices for the following reasons: (i) the Tijuana-San Diego border is the most transited one in the world with approximately 25,000 pedestrian and 50,000 vehicle crossings per day (U.S. CBP, 2019), and (ii) together, this set of twin cities has the highest number of transborder pupils and students, that is approximately 16,287 learners (SEGOB, 2016). This data shows the dynamism of the Cali-Baja border.



In this case, the border's porousness allowed for constructing a transborder space with its own set of dynamics. Often, limited visibility of a population translates institutionally into discriminatory practices. This is of particular concern when minors are at the receiving end of violent practices. It is essential to underscore that not all of the pupils and students face the same challenges. However, the following were the initial personal and professional observations that provoked this study and that will be further analysed in this research.

### Border Waiting Times

The average waiting time for documented border crossers is 1.5 hours (Calva, L., 2016). Some transborder pupils and students start the day as early as 3:00 a.m. to make sure they will make it to school on time. Border waiting time is a mechanism of control enforced by the U.S. via U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers. Some 'border moms and dads' go in advance to the Port of Entry (PoE) around 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. to save a place in the line for their children. Those teachers that were sensitive to the transborder challenges and dynamics have reported a direct link between the pupil's schedule and performance.

### Documented Unaccompanied Minors

It is usual for this population to cross the border without parental companionship regardless of their age. This practice puts them into a vulnerable situation when crossing this international border by themselves, where children get interrogated, and belongings scanned. However, the legislation for unaccompanied minors crossing the Mexico-U.S. border only looks at the undocumented population (American Immigration Council, 2015). This entails a perception that documented minors crossing this international, policed and surveilled border are not vulnerable nor require specific safeguarding measures at land Ports of Entry (PoE). Additionally, this situation reflects that the notion of vulnerability in a border context is exclusively understood through the absence of lawful immigration documents and does not apply to unaccompanied minors when they have a passport or visa.

### Transborder Pupils and Students are Victims of Harassment and Discrimination

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers can be violent towards border crossers. These learners are vulnerable and victims of institutional violence regardless of the type of immigration document they hold. The trustworthiness to enter the U.S. is mediated and subjectively granted by CBP officers. It is also important to highlight that these 'second-class' U.S. citizens do not have access to social services, state funding for education, nor access to health services since they do not reside formally in the U.S. (Castañeda, E., 2018).

Moreover, gendered practices are also observed at the land Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. Female border commuters, including pupils, experience sexual harassment while waiting to cross the border or transiting this space. Such harassment comes from CBP officers and other border crossers present at the PoE. Physical violence is also observable in such areas.

### Limited Access to U.S. Public Education

Access to public education in the U.S. is granted by residency location and not by citizenship status. The majority of the budget for public education comes from property taxes. Proof of residency may vary from district to district but in all of them is a requirement.<sup>2</sup> Fees from approximately 800 to 1000 U.S. dollars per month might apply to those attending a school in a district different from the one of residence. These fees are hard to meet, especially for low-income parents in Mexico. In this sense, some of them provide borrowed documentation from a third party that could be a family friend, relative, or someone else living in the school district of preference. Some families rent houses or rooms in the U.S. to meet such requirements when possible. In some academic institutions, transborder learners are even enrolled as homeless pupils. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, established in 1987 and re-authorised in 2015, requires school districts to provide 'equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths' (Education for Homeless Children and Youths, 2019).

However, the state Department of Education regularly audits all school districts to ensure that residency requirements are met. In 2010, the district of Ajo in Arizona paid 1.2 million U.S. dollars to the state Department of Education for granting access to school to 105 pupils living on the Mexican side (Leigh, P., 2012). However, the Senate Bill No. 257 was approved in California in October 2017. The Bill amends section 48050 of the Education Code stating that a pupil complies with residency requirements for accessing public school when proving a parent was removed from the country against her or his will and was living in California until deportation. The Bill entails that the pupil previously enrolled in a Californian institution was moved outside of the state. This is a legal achievement towards an institutionalised recognition of transborder learners. However, it does not cover pupils whose parents voluntarily left the country and those whose parents were not living in California. Moreover, it does not include U.S. born population whose parents have not lived in the U.S. previously.

### Transborder Pupils and Students Are Not Included in the Current Binational Framework of Cooperation in Education

Binational cooperation in education between Mexico and the U.S., more precisely with California, has been consistent since the 1970s through several programmes such as the *Programa Binacional de Educación Migrante (PROBEM)* (Binational Program for Migrant Education). However, it was not until 2018 that the binational framework began to officially contemplate pupils and students returning to Mexico due to the immigration policies during the presidency of Barack Obama. This episode is known as The Great Expulsion (Zúñiga, V. y Hamman, E., 2019).

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<sup>2</sup> At least three documents are required ranging from a driving licence from a parent to utility bills, recent rental documentation, or mortgage statements (California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 432).

This effort to visibilize these learners returning to Mexico was led by the University of California under a programme called 'The Students We Share/*Los Estudiantes Que Compartimos*'. This programme became an approach calling for both governments to be co-responsible for these returnees' education, transiting both systems. Nevertheless, transborder learners in constant transit between these two countries also face challenges in their academic journeys that are not considered in the binational framework. However, the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding in education between Mexico, California, and the University of California could provide the political ground to develop further programmes for transborder learners.

This introductory overview of transborder learners shows the complexity of their dynamic that should be considered when looking at transborderism in the Cali-Baja region. The narratives of this population help us to understand border dynamics through the lived experiences of documented pupils and students.

## **V. Research Questions and Structure of the Thesis**

Considering the aforementioned initial observations, I began formulating the three main questions that guided this qualitative research, intending to contribute to the understanding of transborderism through the narratives of transborder learners. Such information would subsequently inform a practical political framework in transborder education:

- i) Why is transborderism practiced via education in the border twin cities of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego?
- ii) What are the challenges transborder pupils and students face in their dynamics at the Cali-Baja region?
- iii) Is it possible to implement a practical transborder framework in the current binational relations in education?

The collected evidence stems from field observations and in-depth interviews with former transborder pupils or students in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego, interviews with governmental authorities, and one interview with a leading transborder scholar. All of which were conducted prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The empirical data was then triangulated for verification to mitigate biases and my positionality as the researcher.<sup>3</sup> The complexity of transborderism embodied by these pupils and students demands further analysis from a linguistic, cultural, anthropological or philosophical dimension that exceeds the objectives of this research. However, it calls for future investigation on these matters.

This research reflects on the development of the Cali-Baja region, the methodological approach, and analyses the wealth of original empirical data collected, to determine the reasons for becoming transborder via education, the main challenges of the practice and subsequent policy implications. It does so in six chapters structured as follows:

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Chapter I analyses the live border connection between Mexico and California through a regional historical account. It does so by looking at the development of the region's political, social, cultural, and demographic configurations since the establishment of the border. It continues analysing the influence of political events on northbound immigration flows that have populated this region. Furthermore, it presents the challenges transborder populations have been facing since the beginning of the 1900s in the Mexico-U.S. context.

Chapter II addresses the methodology and methods for gathering the empirical data that informed the further analysis of transborderism and its practices in the Cali-Baja region. In this section, the ethnographically informed approach is discussed. The chapter also explains the baseline field observations and further reflections on ethical concerns when researching the Cali-Baja region. Furthermore, data protection and personal issues are discussed concerning the intense surveillance of this space, and possible repercussions for the participants and the researcher.

Chapter III presents the first site of empirical analysis of transborder pupils and students: home. Through the narratives of the participants, the reasons for becoming transborder are discussed. Important elements such as a new configuration of the parent's 'American dream' is presented as essential for partaking in transborder practices. Moreover, a categorisation of the reasons for becoming a transborder figure is presented and analysed. This furthers our understanding of the phenomenon. The understanding of education as a social equaliser adopted by the parents is also analysed.

Chapter IV discusses the land Ports of Entry between Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego as the second location of the participant's transborder dynamic. More precisely, the chapter analyses the hardship of this space mediated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers. The dynamic of border crossing that includes unreasonable waiting times is essential to grasp the challenges of transborder practices. More importantly, issues related to safeguarding of documented unaccompanied minors, gender, and physical violence, are also addressed.

Chapter V presents an account and analysis of the in-school practices that affect transborder pupils located in Calexico, El Centro, and San Diego, California. At School is the third location for this subgroup. School dynamics are relevant for this research as they are linked to the pupil's transborder condition and process. In the case of private schools, language policies and other punitive systems are discussed. With regards to public schools, the hardship to avoid residency disclosure is presented.

Chapter VI analyses after school activities, including state-funded programmes for the development of literacy and language skills. However, the pupils have limited access to such programmes as they need to cross the border back to Mexico. Furthermore, the role of parental support is discussed concerning homework help and presence in schools. Both aspects are considered to be essential in the academic performance of pupils but affected by border policies.

The Conclusion presents the final remarks based on this research's empirical findings and discusses the theoretical contributions to the Mexico-U.S. scholarship and transborderism. Such analysis intends to understand the Cali-Baja region further and contribute to different local border practices. This section also analyses relevant policies and discusses the possibility of including a transborder perspective on the current binational framework in education. In concrete terms, the section calls for the signing of a Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share between Mexico and California.

# CHAPTER I

## A Live Connection: Reading the Mexico-U.S. Border from the Cali-Baja Region

### I. Introduction

The links between Mexico and California are multidimensional. The complexity of these state-state relations is the product of the regional history, the policies imposed that articulate such relations, and the subsequent sociocultural reaction of the adjacent communities. As James Rosenau (1993) argues, the overlapping of Mexico and California does not transform different communities into a coherent one with shared values and characteristics that are usually associated with territoriality. However, there are considerable consequences of such overlapping that Rosenau refers to as 'Connection' understood as 'the presence of a meaningful whole, of diverse interdependencies, of unavoidable interactions, even as it also implies that the prevailing structures of California and Mexico are such that the interactions are endemic and likely to endure for the foreseeable future' (Rosenau, J., 1993:3). The multiscale and multidimensionality of the Mexico-California connection are based on the overlapping of different political structures, interdependent and asymmetrical economy, shared colonial history, migration flux, the emergence of sub-communities, and border tensions. However, the study of this connection and its specific details is challenging due to the difficulty to identify and comprehend each thread that conforms said connection's fabric (Rosenau, J., 1993).

Some clues were given by Rosenau when he identified at least eleven areas that impact these neighbouring communities: i) science and technology, ii) commerce and trade, iii) conservation vs. development, iv) labour, v) agriculture, vi) migration, vii) education, viii) human rights, ix) religion, x) environment and, xi) health and welfare. These issues are part of the connection and cannot be addressed by traditional state views of sovereignty and dusted approaches to emergent contemporary processes (Rosenau, J., 1993). Just the mere enunciation of these shared topics does not explain this connection per se, but it does depict the complexity for further theorisation, especially when the connection is 'live'. All attempts to grasp transborder dynamics will fail if departing from a static border. The dynamism and (re)making of the transborder fabric can be best understood from the Cali-Baja border perspective, and not through historical views stemming from the interior zones of Mexico and the U.S. In other words, the best way to understand the Cali-Baja border is from its borderlands. Such a regional approach to history is informed by events on other Mexico-U.S. border regions and national policies, particularly on migration and border protection.

In this sense, and to understand the Cali-Baja live connection, it is necessary to provide an account of the history of the shared border that influenced the dynamics that boosted political and social reconfigurations. For this purpose, the chapter begins with the colonial history and the establishment of the Mexico-U.S. border. During this period of time, border connections and dynamics were already substantial. However, tensions between both countries started to deepen

and in 1846 the Mexico and U.S. conflict began. In 1848, the Treaty Guadalupe-Hidalgo marked the end of the war and the beginning of the new border era.

Furthermore, Mexico ceded its northern territories (Ganster, P., & Lorey, D., 2016). This episode is still considered an 'open wound' (Anzaldúa, G., 1987) in Mexican narratives. As soon as the latest border was established in 1854 through The Gadsden Purchase, border and migration control policies started to affect the social environment of the Cali-Baja region. In this vein, the chapter then presents the different border and migration policies through stages and periods of time, as well as the subsequent social realigning. For that reason, each historical analysis is divided into the political and the social dimension. The purpose is to grasp the conformation of the Cali-Baja live connection and the intersection between state constructs and social dynamics. The first stage comprises the period of 'open to closed border' (1848–1930). The second stage includes the years from 1940 to 1985, covering the Bracero Program and its influence on the Mexico-U.S. immigration dynamic. The third stage is concerned with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the establishment of Operation Gatekeeper, and the configuration of border commuters. Lastly, the chapter addresses the stage from 2005 to 2019 known as the Great Expulsion (Zúñiga, V. y Hamman, E., 2019), characterised by the return of Mexican immigrants to Mexico, their relocation to border regions, and the demographic reconfigurations.

## **II. Colonial History of the Mexico-U.S. Border**

In 1492, the Americas were inhabited by approximately sixty million people, of which twenty-one million (35%) lived in Mexico, and one million resided on the Mexico-U.S. border region. This region comprises the Mexican states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and the U.S. states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The native populations were nomads and gatherers since the regional landscape is mostly arid. Such natural features fostered small tribal formations independent from each other that made this a heterogenic region. In contrast, and looking specifically at the centre and south of Mexico, the weather allowed complex political, economic, and social formations, such as the Aztec and the Maya empires.

When Spanish settlers arrived in the region from 1513 to 1543, forty-five different native groups were identified and most of them spoke a different language. For example, in Chihuahua and Sonora states, the main languages were, Tarahumara, Concho, Opata, Pima, Cahita, and Seri. In New Mexico and Arizona, another fourteen languages were linked to indigenous groups. Furthermore, several Athabaskan groups settled in the region: Kiowa-Apache and Lipan Apache in Texas whilst Jicarilla, Mescalero, Apache, and Navajo settled in Arizona, New Mexico, Chihuahua, and Sonora. Other groups also populated the region, such as the Yuman that settled in California and the Kumeyaay that extended from the Pacific to the Colorado Desert. Alongside the Colorado River, Quechan and Cocopah settlements were found. Other rivers like the Rio Grande and, Salt and Gila

River fostered agricultural settlements that harvested mainly maize, beans, and squash (Ganster, P. and Lorey, D., 2016).

At that time, Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans ran missions to evangelise Native Americans and incorporate them into 'New Spain'. The mission was accomplished within a century. Mineral exploitation such as gold and silver attracted many immigrants to the region. By 1700, New Spain failed to keep expanding the settlements to these areas. The population arriving in these lands quickly adapted to local conditions, creating new social processes and codes different from those in the interior zones. These new practices contributed to the emergence of the first Mexico-U.S. borderlands.

In 1769, the Spanish divided California's territory into two, Alta (upper) California and Baja (lower) California. Alta California was granted to the Franciscans and Baja California to the Dominican's administration. Henceforth, these territories were referred to as 'The Californias' (Durrenberger, R., 1969). In 1821, Mexico became an independent country and just as the Spaniard colonizers, it failed on integrating the northern territories to the rest of the country. This political, cultural, and economic distance had political repercussions (Ortiz, J., 1997) that posteriorly materialised as the Mexico-U.S. geopolitical border.

### **III. When the Border Crossed Mexico: The Open Wound**

Mexico, as a new country, started a nationalist movement promoting its new identity and opportunities. Commercial opportunities were sought by U.S. citizens and moved to the Mexican border states of Sonora and Chihuahua. As a result, and combined with a series of political events, Mexico and U.S. tensions over the border territories escalated.

In 1832, the Treaty Adams-Onís between the U.S. and Spain, but ratified by Mexico, was signed. This Treaty established Mexican sovereignty over the state of Texas. Since the borderlands were still relatively uninhabited, Mexico introduced a settlement policy facilitating the provision of large pieces of land to foreign settlers, including those from the U.S., under the condition to acquire Mexican citizenship. This policy was an effort to build political, economic, and social ties with the northern territory. The policy was counterproductive in the cases of Texas and Alta California. By the end of the 1830s, the number of U.S. settlers was higher than Mexican settlers in these territories (Bosh, C., 1991, Ganster, P. and Lorey, D., 2016). This demographic characteristic contributed to the emergence of independence and secession movements as the population distanced themselves from the central Mexican government.

Furthermore, the promulgation of new Mexican Constitutions did not align with the borderlands' political or economic demands. The Constitution of 1824 banned slavery in Mexico and imposed high taxes. As a result, Texas' economy suffered the consequences (Conociendo mi Entidad, 2017). This Constitution granted the title of territories to California and New Mexico without enacting regulations for territorial governance. In 1836, the Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna

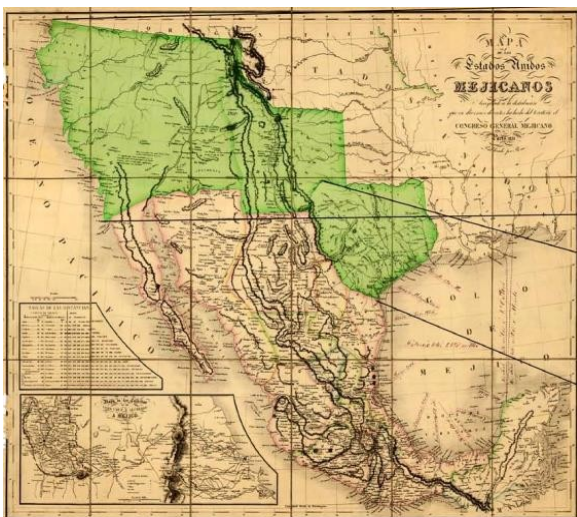


promulgated a centralised constitution and Texans felt misrepresented, resulting in an independence movement. After an armed conflict with Mexico, Texas became independent in 1836 and posteriorly annexed to the U.S. in 1845 (Fowler, W., 2007, Ganster, P. and Lorey, D., 2016).

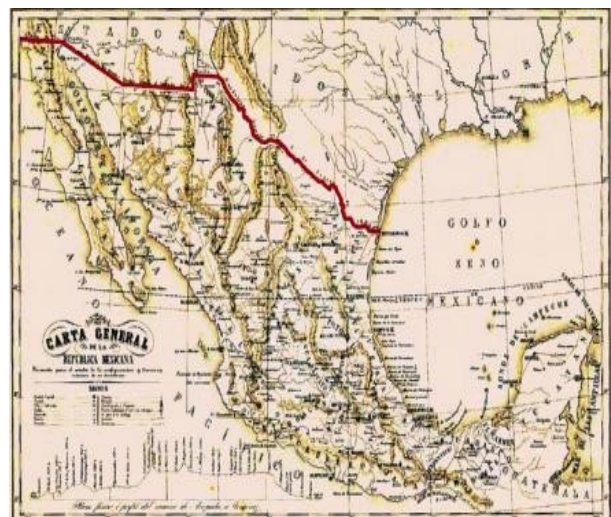
The diplomatic relations between Mexico and the U.S. were in continuous tension and escalating. Constant territorial disputes, the political unconformities, different trade systems, the beginning of the Destiny Manifest sentiment, and the colonial past incited an uprising. When Texas became independent, Great Britain and France expressed intentions to buy the territory. Subsequently, the U.S. government thought that Mexico, in acute debt since its independence, could potentially sell Alta California to Great Britain. The 'possibility' of having European countries buying northern Mexican states continued to affect Mexico and U.S. relations negatively. Such tensions between neighbours resulted in 'The Mexican-U.S. War' from 1846 to 1848.

In September 1847, the U.S. army occupied Mexico City (Ganster, P., & Lorey, D., 2016). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in February 1848, ending the invasion and the war. As a result, Mexican ceded 500,000 square miles, including what today are the states of Arizona, California, western Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah, to the U.S. (Acuña, R., 2007). This territorial extension represented one-third of the entire Mexican territory.

In the case of Texas and Alta California, Mexico officially accepted the secession of these territories since both had armed uprisings claiming independence from Mexico (Durrenberger, R., 1969). In 1953, the U.S. bought approximately 30,000 square miles of land through The Gadsden Purchase (Tamayo, L., and Moncada, J., 2000). The Gadsden Purchase or *La venta de la Mesilla* became effective in 1854 delimiting the border of Arizona and New Mexico. The Guadalupe-Hidalgo signing and The Gadsden Purchase marked the current geopolitical Mexico-U.S. demarcation. This particular historical episode still resonates in Mexican sociopolitical representations. The Mexican President Santa Anna is today considered a national traitor in Mexican narratives.<sup>4</sup>



Map 2. The territories in green were ceded to the U.S. in 1848. However, Texas was already independent since 1836. Source: *Gobierno de México*.



Map 3. The red line shows the border established in 1854 after the Gadsden Purchase. Source: *Gobierno de México*.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Karl Marx referred to Santa Anna as 'genius' in a letter sent to Friedrich Engels in December of 1854, as he managed to stop the territorial expansion of the U.S. (De Toledo y J., D., 1939).

The economic dynamics of the region have always been affected by the political tensions between Mexico and U.S. even before the war. However, in 1821 Mexico authorised commerce and trade with the U.S. and European countries. During New Spain, such economic relations were considered illegal but grew exponentially once the country became independent. These trade practices strengthened the economic ties between Mexican and U.S. border territories. Inevitably, regional social and political dynamics also became stronger and revindication movements flourished. In 1850, a group of filibusters from the U.S. invaded the entire Mexican peninsula of Baja California and Baja California Sur, calling for its political separation from the rest of Mexico. The next state to be invaded was Sonora. When these filibusters arrived in La Paz port in Baja California Sur, a flag with two red stripes and two red stars waved instead of the Mexican flag. The red stars represented the state of Baja California and Sonora. The leader of this filibuster invasion was the former U.S. soldier William Walker. This army encountered Mexican resistance in the port of Ensenada and was sent back to the U.S. (Conociendo mi Entidad, 2017). This episode shows that political and social reconfigurations of the Cali-Baja border were still settling. This was particularly visible during the following years.

The complete establishment of the new geopolitical border in 1854 divided communities, families, and cities. The population of these regions had to decide to become Mexican or U.S. citizens. The Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty stipulated that U.S. citizenship would be granted to those who chose to remain in the newly acquired U.S. territories. Such policy was mirrored by the Mexican government offering Mexican citizenship. The estimated number of Mexicans caught 'in-between' was approximately 100,000. In the case of Mexico, the government granted citizenship by state jurisdiction. However, U.S. citizenship was not easy to grant due to 'racial' implications. Eventually, only white males were eligible for U.S. citizenship, excluding Native Americans and Black people (Griswold del Castillo, R., 1990). In this vein, Nicholas De Genova (2005) stated the following: 'The real accomplishment of the treaty, therefore, was that perhaps as many as 100,000 Mexican nationals were summarily disenfranchised of Mexican citizenship and became colonized U.S. subjects' (De Genova, N., 2005: 220).

After establishing the new geopolitical demarcation, Mexico granted the affected border population one year to remain Mexican or acquire U.S. citizenship. If they chose to keep their Mexican citizenship, they were exhorted to move and resettled on the southern part of the border (Délano, A., 2011). Even with adverse colonial conditions, mostly racism, some people decided to stay on the U.S. side due to the 'Gold Rush' that began in 1849. Such a phenomenon brought immigrants from all parts of the world to California, increasing its non-indigenous population from 14,000 to 225,000 in just five years (Ganster, P, & Lorey, D., 2016).

Nonetheless, special commissioners were sent to California, New Mexico, and Texas to seed the interest of former Mexican families to relocate to Mexico, with the promise of obtaining free land. Those of Mexican origin who returned to Mexico mainly settled on the border region to take advantage of the existing trade dynamics. The Mexican border cities of Mier, Camargo, Reynosa,

and Matamoros registered an increment in population, and some other cities such as Nuevo Laredo were founded. By the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, almost one-quarter of the population living on the border region were resettlers from the U.S.

By the end of the 1850s, the Mexican government acknowledged the particular trade dynamics of the border region declaring the establishment of 'free zones'. On these free zones, goods were traded circularly without taxation. By 1885, the entire Mexico-U.S. border stripe was exempted from trade taxes (Ganster, P, & Lorey, D., 2007).

As accounted, political and economic aspects affected the geopolitical conformation of both Mexico and the U.S. The dynamics and population configurations started to separate the northern regions from the interior zones once again. During some periods, the border state structure was laxer than others. This fluctuation provoked diverse reactions to the ongoing economic migration flows that began prior the establishment of the current border. These different stages of openness and restraint are analysed in the following sections.

#### **IV. The New Mexico-U.S. Border Condition: 1848–1930**

##### IV. I The Political Dimension: From Open to Closed Border

Josiah Heyman (1991) argues that the Mexico-U.S. border experienced an 'open period' from 1848 to 1917. During this time, there was limited immigration control when crossing the border, convenient for the development of U.S industry, specifically railroads and agriculture. For instance, the U.S. employed around 4,500 Mexicans just for railroad construction (Acuña, R., 2007, Barrera, M.,1979). Such industry and the constant demand of labour impacted binational relations deeply. During the Mexican presidency of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911), railroad construction was an essential state investment, incrementing the border region and the interior zones connectivity (Durrenberger, R., 1969, Ganster, P., and Lorey, D., 2016). Such connectivity allowed more Mexicans to join the migrant labour flow demanded by the U.S., especially after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As part of the railroad expansion, the Central Pacific Railroad Company brought thousands of Chinese workers to the U.S. (Gyory, A., 1998)<sup>5</sup>. Initially, this Act only prohibited Chinese immigration for ten years, but by 1902 it became a permanent immigration policy driven by racist sentiments towards this population (Guerin-González, C., 1993, Lee, E., 2003).

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<sup>5</sup> This type of recruitment of labour force was not new. Cohen (1987) argues that capitalism has always used 'free labour force' (Castles, S., 2006:37). The colonial States had an important role in international immigration attracting immigrants or nationals to populate its colonies. In the United Kingdom, for example, advertising campaigns were implemented to increase the population in its colonies. The administration would offer to pay for travel expenses and provided help with the relocation. Another example is during World War I where the United Kingdom and France also recruited labour force, especially from the colonies, to work in their countries (*idem*).

Hence, many Chinese people migrated to Mexico influencing the demographic configuration of Baja California.

Porfirio Díaz also sold, very cheaply, around half a million hectares of the territories along the Colorado River and the Mexicali valley. Guillermo Andrade, a personal friend to the President, held land titles for all of this region. At the same time, he sold them to a consortium from San Francisco called The Colorado River Land Company (CRLC). The CRLC was dedicated to harvesting cotton employing Mexicans and Asian immigrants affected by Act (Kering, P., 2001). Until 1936, under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, these lands were expropriated by the Mexican state and granted to national farmers (La Crónica, 2018). However, Díaz's management of the country and his dictatorship were coming to an end. The following Mexican political episode also affected the Mexico-U.S. borderlands.

On 20 November 1910, the *Plan de San Luis Potosí* was released in San Antonio, Texas. The author, Francisco I. Madero escaped imprisonment in Mexico. Madero and Díaz were presidential candidates in 1910, but Díaz allegedly won. Madero called for nullifying the elections and was imprisoned (Brown University Library, 2019) but escaped to Texas. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 resulted from profound social and economic precarity, labour exploitation, and asymmetrical land distribution (SEGOB, 2019).

On the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*, Madero proclaimed himself President of Mexico and established the first headquarters of his presidency on the fifth floor of Caples Building in downtown El Paso, Texas (Alexander, T. and Utley, D., 2012). From this office, Madero rallied his followers and commanded riots against Porfirio Díaz. In 1911, Madero became the legitimate President of Mexico. The border population on the U.S. side considered the battles between armies during the Mexican Revolution as live entertainment. People would gather on rooftops facing the Mexican side of the border. Bets on the winners of the battles were conducted, and postcards with Mexican bullet holes were sent throughout the U.S. (Dorado, D., 2013, Stern, A., 1999). Despite the entertainment provided by the conflict, these battles heighten the territorial tensions throughout the border stripe. In 1915, the *Plan de San Diego* called for an armed insurrection in Texas against the U.S. government, reclaiming the territories lost in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848. The objective was to make California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona independent for later annexation to Mexico. The Plan was discovered by the U.S. government when one of the authors, Basilio Ramos, was arrested in 1915 (Ganster, P. and Lorey, D., 2016). The *Plan de San Diego* reflected the open wound. The Mexican revolution and political unrests of the region affected the border control policies and the 'closed border' period commenced.

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<sup>6</sup> Countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom also implemented immigration policies based on racial exclusion. The United Kingdom excluded Jews from East Europe. Canada and Australia excluded Asians (*idem*).

#### IV.II 1917–1930: Stricter Border Controls and The Bath Riots

The Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the emergence of eugenics across the U.S. had a significant effect on the Mexico-U.S. border and immigration control practices (Dorado, D. 2005, Dorado, D. 2013, Fischer, R., 2013). One of the most critical episodes of discrimination against border crossers were the Bath Riots on 28 January 1917. The Bath Riots took place at the Santa Fe Bridge that connects El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. That morning, Carmelita Torres, a 17-year-old maid and border commuter, refused to be disinfected at the border checkpoint and continued her commute. A customs official asked her to leave the trolley and proceed to the disinfection camp required for all border commuters entering the U.S. Carmelita got off the trolley and convinced other Mexican women to join her in protest. By noon, the demonstrations against the disinfection practices gathered several thousands of border commuters (Dorado, D., 2005, Burnett, J., 2006). The protesters would lay in front of the trolley tracks and throw empty bottles and rocks at the U.S. police force that was trying to disperse the crowd (Burnett, J., 2006). The Bath Riots showed the violence experienced at the border crossing ports that is still present today.

A red brick building constructed in 1910 served as a cleaning site where every land arrival from Mexico needed to be washed with soap and water. In 1916 and after a substantial investment of 6,000 U.S. dollars, the building became a disinfection camp for border crossers coming from the Mexican side (Stern, A., 1999). This was part of a 'health' local campaign. This campaign showed the hardship of the medicalisation of the Mexico-U.S. border affecting border crossers and commuters. Tom Lea was the mayor for El Paso and influenced by the eugenics movements of the time. He also wanted to 'clean' the city from Mexicans who were seen as dirty and unsanitary. For instance, pejorative terms such as 'greaser' were used when referring to Mexicans during that period (Dorado, D., 2005). In 1916, reports of a typhus epidemic among Mexican revolutionaries and U.S. troops circulated among U.S. border authorities (Stern, A., 1999). Typhus is an infection transmitted by lice and Mayor Tom Lea designed a contingency plan to tackle the issue. He sent several telegrams to Washington officials requesting a 'quarantine camp' that would hold land border crossers up to fourteen days to assure they were not infected. Only after such period, would border crossers be compliant with one of the several checks they had to undergo to enter the U.S. The officials denied such a petition as typhus did not represent a threat to the U.S population.

Instead, Dr B. Lloyd, a Public Health Service official at El Paso, suggested delousing plants to bathe and disinfect 'dirty' people crossing from Mexico (Burnett, J., 2006). One disinfection plant was established at the Santa Fe Bridge and consisted of different chambers. First, children, women, then men, were forced to strip down and walk to the disinfection room to have their 'hairy parts' inspected for lice, by customs inspectors. The clothes were taken to be steam dried and fumigated. While they waited for the clothes and baggage, border crossers passed through a gas chamber to be fumigated with Zyklon B. Those who had lice were shaved. Then, the clothes were returned to them and they were given a pass stating that they have been disinfected. The pass was valid for only eight days. Such a humiliating process was worst for women. When they were stripped naked, some U.S.

immigration officials would take pictures and post them inside a local bar in El Paso. Carmelita Torres and many other female border crossers were victims of this sexual violence and refused to comply with the process (Dorado, D., 2005, 2013).

This medicalisation of the border and migration (Dorado, D., 2005) had critical international implications. David Dorado pointed out the influence of these fumigation plants had on some of the Nazi practices conducted in concentration camps. Dorado found a German pest science journal, *Anzeiger fur Schadlinskundle*, written by Dr Gerhard Peters, demonstrating the effectiveness of Zyklon-B on killing pests. The article included two pictures of the disinfection plants at the Texas border. During World War II, Dr Peters, through his company, was the primary supplier of this chemical used in the gas chambers on concentration camps. Dr Peters was later convicted during the Nuremberg trials but found not guilty. Dorado warns the reader that although the experiences on the Santa Fe disinfection plant and Nazi concentration camps were not the same, 'the events in Germany did not occur in a historical vacuum. There were important connections between the discourse of eugenics, immigration control, and the racialized politics of public health underlying the disinfection chambers in both parts of the world.' (Dorado, D., 2013:165). The fumigation practice of border crossers continued throughout the following decades until the end of the Bracero Program in 1962. Approximately 100,000 Mexicans were deloused at the Santa Fe Bridge in 1917 alone (Dorado, D., 2005).

Along with stricter border controls, the U.S. government enacted the Immigration Act of 1917. The Act introduced two additional requirements for crossing to the U.S. from the Mexican side: (i) a literacy assessment that consisted of applying a basic reading and comprehension test in Spanish or English to immigrants over sixteen, and (ii) 8 U.S. dollars tax per immigrant at the entry port (U.S. Department of State, 2018). However, Mexican domestic conditions were not favourable for immigrants to fulfil such requirements (Reisler, M., 1976).

Immigrants of non-Mexican origin were also targeted with stricter immigration stipulations. Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the establishment of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 affected Japanese immigrants reflecting segregation sentiments in California (Cullinane, M., 2014). Ten years later, the Immigration Act extended the 'alien population' to Asian immigrants from India, Burma, Thailand, the Malay States, the East Indian Islands, Asiatic Russia, the Polynesian Islands, and parts of Arabia Afghanistan (Hing, B., 1993). In 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act placed an immigration quota system introduced by the Republican Senator from Vermont, William P. Dillingham. Through this Act, the number of visas available was 350,000 which allegedly represented 3% of the number of foreign-born immigrants residing in the U.S., identified during the 1910 demographic census. However, the Congress modified such a system and lowered the percentage to two and took only into consideration the 1890 census (U.S. Department of State, 2018).

During the 1930s, the Great Depression triggered another wave of returnees to Mexico. The U.S. government expelled Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to Mexico because Mexican labour immigration was defined by the labour status itself. Therefore, during the crisis when they were unemployed, they were expected to return to Mexico. The U.S. government stated that those who return to Mexico 'voluntarily' would have the option to re-enter the U.S. legally afterwards. However, the entry conditions changed rapidly, and the U.S. only granted visas to Mexicans with specific financial solvency. By 1935, approximately half a million Mexicans and Mexican-Americans had left the U.S. and resettled in Mexico, particularly on the border region (Balderrama, F. and Rodriguez, R., 1995). This contributed to the already ongoing social reconfigurations.

#### IV. III The Social Dimension: Initial Reconfigurations

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after establishing the new international border in 1854, social changes and different demographic processes developed in this region. These were triggered by the exponentially increasing population of labour migrants heading to the U.S. One of the most affected groups were Native Americans that were separated by the new boundary affecting their livelihood directly. This is true particularly for the Kumeyaay, the Cocopah, and the Tohono O'odham. The Mexican and U.S. government did not allow indigenous groups to move freely across the border, impacting their way of living in an irreversible way. Furthermore, the increasing population in the borderlands started to marginalize further the indigenous population.

Moreover, the railroad industry, mining, agriculture, and trade were a magnet for Mexican immigrants, some of which stayed at the border region tripling its population rate. Between the years 1877 and 1910, Baja California and Nuevo León were the two Mexican border states with more population growth, followed by Coahuila and Tamaulipas (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016). This demographic boom resulted in social reconfigurations. Elites were rising, and native *Californios*, particularly of Spanish descent, were displaced. For instance, Californios were 82% of the state population in 1850, and by 1880, they only represented 19%.

The Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) affected border control policies directly. The armed conflict displaced to the U.S. approximately 10% of the Mexican population by 1930. Poverty and food shortages were two of the main factors that caused such displacement. Another important indicator is the number of border crossings. By 1920, around 890,371 Mexicans had crossed the border, including 628,000 temporary workers. In the year 1912 only, there were 23,238 crossings, and just in October 1913, 8,000 Mexicans crossed the border (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016).

During the Great Depression (1929–1933), the U.S. government repatriated around 500,000 Mexicans between 1929 and 1935. A considerable percentage of returnees stayed at the border region with the hope of crossing to the U.S. once again. Thus, different social challenges arose (Romer, C., 1990). To deal with this new situation of returnees, the Mexican government set several initiatives to support this new border population. For instance, *Juntas de Beneficiencia* were created

to cover the returnees' immediate basic needs in border cities. The central Mexican government made a significant effort but failed at providing free transportation to the returnees to the Mexican interior zones. Furthermore, the government could not guarantee employment to these Mexicans (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016).

In the case of Baja California, the returnees with robust skills in agriculture found a home in the Mexicali Valley. In Tijuana, Mexican returnees and Mexicans fond of Francisco Villa, a Mexican revolutionary leader, established the *Libertad* neighbourhood. By 1940, the six Mexican border states had a combined population of 2.6 million people, almost one million more than those registered in 1900. On the other side of the border, the population increased at a greater scale. In 1900 the registered population was of 4.9 million and by 1940, it was of 14.4 million. (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016).

This boom in border population attracted not only labour immigrants aiming to cross the border but also other professionals that saw an opportunity in the demographic expansion. For example, health, hospitality, and other services were established on the Mexican side of the border (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016). The aftermath of the Braceros Program also had a major influence on the later social reconfigurations and on immigration policies.

## **V. Cross-Border Circulation: 1940–1985**

### **V.I The Political Dimension: The Braceros Program**

During World War II, U.S. agriculture was suffering from limited the labour force available for the sector. Regardless of the nation's general 'anti-Mexican' sentiment, the U.S. government turned again to Mexican labour immigration. At the same time, Mexican unemployment rates were high, and those fortunate enough to have a job were underpaid. In a way, the pulling and the pushing factors complemented each other. To this day, Mexico and the U.S. do not have an immigration reform, although several attempts were made. However, the Braceros Program functioned as a sort of immigration agreement benefiting both countries (Délano, A., 2011).

The Bracero Program lasted twenty-two years (1942–1964) and had the main objective of fostering U.S. agricultural growth through temporary contracts provided to Mexican farmers. They would work on the fields picking seasonal harvests like tomatoes, cotton, lemons, strawberries, asparagus, and other fruits. Then, the Program expanded to the railroad sector (Galarza, E., 1964, Raglan, C., 2009, Mandeel, E., 2014). Upon their return to Mexico, Braceros would employ agricultural techniques and knowledge to foster the Mexican countryside. To 'guarantee' such return, the Mexican government would hold 10% of the Bracero's salary and make it available to the worker once in Mexican territory (Galarza, E., 1964).

Initially, the Program was set for only one year but got extended to a total of twenty-two. In Mexico and particularly in some towns in Michoacán, the Program became so successful that nine out of ten migrants that travelled to the U.S. for the first time, were under this scheme (Chávez, S.,



2016). Regulations regarding wage (3 U.S. dollars per hour) and living conditions were set in advance. However, in 1948, U.S. field owners decided to decrease the salary for cotton workers to 2.50 U.S. dollars per hour. The Mexican government protested and managed to keep the salary at 3 U.S. dollars. In response, the U.S. government 'lax' the border for undocumented immigrants to work in the fields for lower wages. The result of such a tactic was a wage drop to 1.50 U.S. dollars per 100 pounds of cotton (Galarza, E., 1964). Interestingly, under the Bracero Program, the U.S. government issued five million contracts and, during the same period of time, equally arrested five million immigrants working as undocumented Braceros (Gutiérrez, D., 1996, Chávez, S., 2016).

Towards the Bracero Program's end, a tactic called the 'revolving door' (Cockcroft, J., 1986) developed. Mexican labour immigrants were welcomed, but returned to Mexico if caught without immigration documents. In 1964 the Bracero Program ended for three specific reasons: (i) discomfort and complaints regarding low-income wages that Mexicans were willing to accept. This created considerable competition from the workers. Several worker unions made such complaints. Another reason was, (ii) the industrialisation and mechanisation of the field. Such modernisation reached the fields of tomatoes and cotton, affecting and reducing the need for human labour and, (iii) precarious working conditions and human rights violations committed by the employers (Raglan, C., 2009).

Before the end of the Bracero Program, Operation Wetback was set in June 1954 in Arizona and California, with the objective to police and protect the border from undocumented agriculture workers through military strategies. The implementation of special task forces in alliance with the military conducted raids and established additional checkpoints. During the same month, approximately 55,000 undocumented immigrants were apprehended (García, J., 1980). The end of the Bracero Program in 1964 had critical demographic implications. Many undocumented *braceros* remained in the U.S., rising to 1.7 million by 1979 and 3.2 million by 1986 (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016). These overstays and social reconfigurations required regulatory approaches for this specific population. In 1986, the U.S. government enacted the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Moreover, those *braceros* that returned to Mexican territory became 'Green Card holders' (Chávez, G., 2006). Some others re-entered the U.S. and continued working on the fields. The resettlement had a significant impact on the borderland milieu's configuration since those Braceros became *commuters* (Villalpando, M., 1977) whilst others migrated to urban jobs, especially in the border cities (Chávez, S., 2016).

## V.II The Social Dimension: Demographic Boom and the Emergence of Border Commuters

The demographic trends until the 1950s showed that U.S. border states grew faster than the adjacent Mexican states. From the year 1950 to 2000, the annual growth of U.S. border states was of 2.5 percent and for the Mexican ones, of 1.2 percent. By 2010, 90.7 million people in total were border residents. This boom was especially illustrative in the case of California that was home to one of every ten U.S. citizens by 2010. The result of this is the construction and development of a border life (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016).

During World War II, California had valuable job offers in different industries such as steel, shipbuilding, and aircraft manufacture, attracting millions of immigrants. Two million internal immigrants moved from the East to the West from 1940 to 1950 since California was more economically developed than Texas. In consequence, the Mexican territory of Baja California increased its population. By the year 1952, the Mexican government granted statehood to Baja California. Previously, the state was only recognised as the Baja California Norte province, where Mexicali and Tijuana are located (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016).

The cities of Mexicali and Tijuana are new in comparison to those located in the interior zones. Tijuana was officially established in 1889 and Mexicali in 1903. Before the 1960s, the border economy was strongly tied and dependant on the U.S. economy. To mitigate this condition and to include the economy of this border region into the Mexican central economy, the Mexican government implemented the *Programa Nacional Fronterizo* (PRONAF) – National Border Program. This programme was an effort to energise and develop the northern border economy. The Border Industrialization Program (BIP) was also launched in 1965, aiming to increase the region's employment rate. BIP was a programme set for economic integration, but also on bringing the border region closer to the rest of the country on cultural and political grounds. Public investment in infrastructure in the border crossing ports, the creation of parks, sports fields and museums, were some of the strategies employed by BIP (Taylor, L., 2003). Furthermore, the programme fostered industrialisation of the border region by establishing manufacturers that required a large pool of labour force. This attracted Mexican producers with fiscal flexibilities. These changes also attracted tourists and immigrants. The BIP, without a doubt, played an essential role in incorporating former *braceros* and other immigrants into the Mexican border economy.

The *maquiladoras* have been an important economic and demographic engine for the Mexican borderlands. During the 1960s, such factories provided mild stability to the Mexican border economy, especially to Mexicali and Tijuana. Just from the period of 1978 to 1993, *maquila* based employment registered a rate of increase of 14% annually. From 1995 to 2006, the rate of increase was of 6.9%, affected by several economic recessions suffered by both countries. It is important to underscore that these figures and rates are higher than the Mexican national average (Ganster, P. & Lorey, D., 2016). In 1969, John. A. Price conducted a study looking at the changes in the consumption practices of U.S. citizens that would cross to Tijuana for different services such as beauty salons and health services. The objective was to assess the impact of the mentioned state policies. The sociologist was able to document how residents from Tijuana also crossed the border to San Diego to take advantage of high-quality goods. These benefits and interactions were unique to the border region. Such circular practices contributed to the rise of border commuters: people living on one side of the border but crossing it daily mainly for work, study, and commercial purposes. When this term started

to be employed, it would only refer to workers living on the Mexican side but working in the U.S. However, it has broadened since Mexicans carry out diverse daily activities across the region. Today, Tijuana holds the largest population of border commuters (35,943), followed by Mexicali (16,013) and Ciudad Juárez (15,164). In numbers, border commuters represent one-fifth of all Tijuana resident wages (Chávez, S., 2016). This heterogenic configuration is one of the challenges of border studies. In general, it is complex to understand the social construction of the population of Mexicali and Tijuana in a binational context (Chávez, S., 2016) as it continues to be impacted by migration policies.

## **VI. The Great Migration: (1986–2005)**

### **VI.I The Political Dimension: IRCA & Operation Gatekeeper**

Different efforts on immigration reforms were made in the administrations of Presidents Ford and Carter. However, the creation of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (SCIRP) in 1981 marked the first step toward the creation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). On 6 November 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act was signed by President Ronald Reagan increasing border security and penalties for employers hiring undocumented immigrants. At the same time, this Act provided U.S. citizenship to millions of undocumented immigrants, becoming the first initiative of a large-scale legalisation programme (MPI, 2011). For these factors, the IRCA is also known as the three-legged Act.

Under IRCA, approximately two million Mexicans living in the U.S. regularised their residency (Massey, D., 2000, Zúñiga, V. y Hamman, E., 2019). Until this point, the immigration trajectories were still circular, and Mexicans travelled between the home and host country several times a year. However, the new state policies disrupted circular dynamics. In consequence, the period of the Great Migration began. The amnesty (Zúñiga, V. and Hamman, E., 2019) that IRCA provided was accompanied by harsh policies regarding border controls and immigration management. IRCA was the precursor of the fence or the wall that divides Mexico and the U.S. today. These state mechanisms of control and division had a tremendous impact on border communities. The idea of an intimidating wall or division was to prevent and deter undocumented entries to the U.S. As a result, U.S. border states started to implement local immigration deterrence programs.

In 1994, Proposition 187 was approved in California, denying undocumented immigrants to have access to two basic services: (i) public education, from primary to post-secondary schools and, (ii) healthcare services except for medical emergencies (Nevis, J., 2002). In California, Operation Gatekeeper was introduced in San Diego to 'restore integrity and safety to the nation's busiest border' (Nevis, J., 2002: 15). The main objective was to increase U.S. capability to deter and control undocumented immigration through the Cali-Baja border. Overall, from 1994 to 1998, the number of

U.S. Border Patrol agents rose from 984 to 2,264, and the underground sensors installed increased from 448 to 1,214. (Nevis, J., 2002).

The year of 1994 epitomizes the ambivalent vocation of the border. The higher the fence or the wall, the wider the point of entry would have to be. Operation Gatekeeper made the fence higher, but the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) made the doors wider. It was the year of paradox and contradiction like the border itself. From the implementation of NAFTA in 1994 to 2000, bilateral trade went from 80 million to 200 million U.S. dollars. Another important indicator of the increasing trade interaction is the number of commercial trucks crossing the border from 886,000 in 1993 to almost 2 million by 1999 (Nevis, J., 2002). Ironically, and due to this commercial success, in 1996, U.S. Congress approved the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that increased the number of U.S. CBP agents starting from 1997 to 2001 (Raglan, C., 2009).

Since the enactment of IRCA, the increasing strategies for policing the border modified the traditional circular immigration dynamic. Interestingly, the hardship of the border and the life-threatening situations of its illegal crossing did not deter people, but instead compelled them to permanently reside in the U.S. (Cornelius, W., 1992, Raglan, C., 2009). In this sense, members of the main and extended family started to migrate to the U.S. to join with those already residing in that country (Uribe Vargas et al., 2012, Zúñiga, V. and Hamman, E., 2019). In response, the U.S. government established in 1996 new rules for deportation that included penalties for re-entry to the country illegally, stays in detention centres, and multi-level law enforcement cooperation (Chishti, M., Pierce, S., and Bolter, J., 2017).

The Great Migration that stemmed from the enacting of IRCA and Operation Gatekeeper had a significant impact on the population's configuration, the communities, transnational connections and the border behaviour. By 2005, more than 10% of the Mexican people born in Mexico resided in the U.S. After that year, the Great Expulsion commenced (Zúñiga, V. and Hamman, E., 2019).

## VI.II The Social Dimension: Border Crossers: Transnational and Transborder Residents

In 1991, the San Diego University of California, created the San Diego Dialogue (SDD) in collaboration with leaders from different sectors such as emerging technology businesses, tourism, real estate, and banking. Afterwards, leaders from all sectors in Tijuana joined the Dialogue. The purpose of the SDD was to bring the region closer through open dialogue about border dynamics. With this in mind, they conducted one research project that contributed to re-conceptualize the region as an integrated one, by providing information about the local border crossing dynamics.

The SDD realised that a common complaint from the business leaders was the border waiting times endured by shoppers from Tijuana. They correctly understood the nature of waiting lines as a deterrent for crossing. Moreover, the SDD realised that authorities on both sides of the border assumed the reasons for crossing without proper evidence of such information. To mitigate this limitation, the SDD, in collaboration with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS),

conducted an ethnographic exercise with the participation of Mexican college students. They surveyed people while waiting in one of the Tijuana-San Diego entry ports. The results showed that 96% of the people would cross the border more than once a week to shop. Such results helped shift the border's perception as a space of migration exclusively to one with different components such as local commerce (SDD, 2004).

As for particularly northbound commuters already residing in this region, the same study showed mainly two categories, the Transnational and Transborder Residents. The elements considered to develop such typology were: the reasons for border crossing such as work or school, the immigration document used for crossing (birth certificate, Green Card or non-immigrant visa), and socioeconomic class.

By considering the aforementioned elements, the Transnational Residents are those Green Card holders living in the U.S. with strong connections to Mexico. This link is also reflected in the activities in the U.S., such as the establishment of the *Coalición de Comunidades Indígenas Oaxaqueños* (Community Coalition of Indigenous Oaxaqueños). In contrast, Transborder Residents are those residing on the Mexican side and crossing the border daily for work or academic purposes. These residents live on the Mexican side due to the low living costs. Therefore, Transborder Residents enjoy the advantages of the proximity with the U.S. (Kada, K. and Kiy, R., 2004). This study provided important contributions to understanding the transborder dynamic in this period as these two groups of border commuters were detected actively crossing the border. This study also provided concise evidence of the heterogeneity of local border commuters in the Cali-Baja region and the variety of reasons for crossing northbound.

The advancements in understanding border commuters during the 1990s and the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century contributed to visibilize the local dynamics of transborder commuters. Traditionally, border commuters' flux has not been part of Mexican statistics in terms of human mobility. In the case of the U.S., the figures only reflect the numbers of cars, trucks, and pedestrians crossing the border regardless of the reasons for crossing. In this sense, an essential demographic account of border commuters is presented further in this chapter.

## **VII. Contemporary Dynamics: 2005–2019**

### **VII.I The Political Dimension: The Great Expulsion**

On 11 September 2001, the terrorist attacks on The World Trade Center in New York City created a national security continuum (Vaughan-Williams, N., 2010). The Mexico-U.S. border control shifted from immigration and human mobility management to a matter of national security. Even though immigration management is often used for political purposes, the terrorist attacks made the thickening and modernisation of the border a crucial national concern. In 2003, one of the largest law enforcement organisations was created, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). With

over 60,000 agents, CBP's budget has been incrementally rising. From 2014 to 2020, the budget went from 10.6 billion to 18.2 billion U.S. dollars (The White House, 2020).

By the time President Barack Obama took office in 2009, President Bush had already developed several mechanisms for stricter border control that integrated new technologies. For instance, Secure Communities Programme was launched to crisscross local detainees' fingerprints with national databases operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Overall, the number of deportations carried during President Bill Clinton's and President George Bush's administrations were staggering. From 1993 to 2000, the total number of Mexico-U.S. border apprehensions was 11,036,463, with 12,290,905 deportations. From 2001 to 2008, the total number of border apprehensions was of 8,055,633, with a total of 10,328,850 deportations. During President Barack Obama administration in 2009-2016, the number of border apprehensions was of 3,307,017 and 5,281,115 deportations (Chishti, M., Pierce, S., and Bolter, J., 2017). The deportation regimes initiated in 1994, combined with the stricter border controls (Operation Gatekeeper in 1994), along with the political (terrorist attacks in 2001), and economic context (Great Recession in 2007), compelled Mexican families to return to Mexico.

Just as the Great Migration, the Expulsion is a contemporary political, economic, sociocultural component that reconfigured Mexican communities, including the borderlands (Hernández-León and Zúñiga, V., 2016). Numbers show that from 2005 to 2010, approximately one million people had returned to Mexico (Giorguli, S., y Gutiérrez, E., 2011, CONAPO, 2018), of which 250,000 were minors. From 2010 to 2015, returnees established residency primarily in the states of Baja California, Jalisco, Estado de México, Guanajuato and Michoacán (CONAPO, 2018). By 2015, of the total number of houses in Baja California, almost 3% were inhabited by returned migrants.

One consequence of the Great Expulsion is the emergence of generation 0.5. Victor Zúñiga (2018) coined this term referring to children that spent their early years in the U.S. but currently reside in Mexico. The term 0.5 aligns with the already existing typology for immigrant children. Children born in the United States to Mexican parents are part of the 'second generation'. Those born in Mexico but brought to the United States at an early age belong to the 1.5 generation (Rumbaut, R., 2004, Zúñiga, V., 2018). Children and adolescents born in the United States but relocated to Mexico belong to generation 0.5 (Zúñiga, V., 2018). This new element in the immigration dynamic compelled Mexican institutions and authorities to respond adequately with innovative approaches. This juncture represents an opportunity to shift from traditional national approaches in education to understandings attuned with transnational and transborder realities.

## VII.II The Social Dimension: Transborder Commuters in Statistics

The demographic panorama of transborder learners is not just a quantitative matter, but it does contribute to the profiling and understanding of the border dynamics. In 2016 the Compendium on International Mobility and Migration: dimensions of the phenomenon in Mexico, by the Secretariat

of Government of Mexico (SEGOB by its acronym in Spanish) through the Migration Policy Bureau, was published. In this study, transborder population were finally included in the statistics. Before 1995, transborder subjects were not considered part of the international migration phenomenon since they resided in Mexico.

In the year 2000, the Mexican government published the first figures for border commuters under the transmigrants category. Transborder migrants refer to commuters that work or study in the U.S. but with official residency in Mexico. However, only information related to transborder workers was gathered until the year 2010. Transborder pupils and students were included only in the following years.

Based on the numbers published in this Compendium, we can observe that the number of transborder migrants in Mexico's northern border has increased over the past decade. In 2000, 87,000 commuters represented 1.6% of the total population that crossed the border that year. By 2015, the number increased to 124,600, representing 1.8% of the people that visited the U.S. Overall, from 1995 to 2015, transborder migrants or commuters have been slightly over the 1% of all border crossers.

In 2015, 52.9%, that is, 65,933 transborder migrants were born in Mexico, and 46.4% in the U.S. These numbers show that almost half of the transborder population is binational. Also, 64.8% were men with a median age of 33, while 4 out of 10 were women with a median age of 24. Moreover, 3 out of 10, in other words, 41,081 transborder migrants, were between 15 and 29 years of age. As for the reasons for border crossing, in 2015 68.2% (85,029) were labour commuters, 29.3% (36,470) were transborder pupils or students, and 2.5% (3,129) crossed the border to work and study. In total, 80,710 men were transborder migrants of which 74.8% (60,384) were labour commuters, 23% (18,544) were transborder pupils or students, and 2.2% (1,728) were both. As for women, there is more of a balance between reasons for commuting, since 56.1% (24,645) were labour migrants, 40.8% (17,926) were transborder learners, and 3.1% (1,347) were both, giving a total of 43,918 women under this category. The 37.2% of border commuters were residents in Baja, California. Tijuana is home to 46,337 commuters, followed by Mexicali with 18,329. These two municipalities are the top two cities of commuters' residency. The state of Baja California has the highest number of transborder students (16,287), followed by Chihuahua (9,319), Sonora (6,728), Tamaulipas (6,508), Coahuila (2,058), and Nuevo León (less than 1,000) (Calva, L., 2016). The peculiarity of this population is that 78% of them were born in the U.S.

In the case of Mexicali, 24.4% of all commuters are transborder students, and in Tijuana, the percentage is only of 19.9. The daily time average required for border crossing is 1 hour and 15 minutes (Vargas, E., 2016). Such waiting time is hard to endure but has become part of the routine of transborder learners. The invisibility of this population (Zúñiga, V., 2016) is one of the biggest concerns in understanding the border. In Baja California, around 50% of the transborder learners are in primary or secondary school, and 40% in middle school (Calva, L., 2016).

Even though per city these learners do not represent half of the population commuting daily, they represent 44.3% of the commuters in total at the Cali-Baja region. In other words, in Mexicali, approximately 4,780 pupils and students attend school daily in the U.S. and in the case of Tijuana, we are referring to about 10,464 learners with the same characteristics. In the case of Mexicali, taking into consideration all levels of education, including postgraduate, transborder pupils, and students represents 1.65% of the school's population in Calexico and 2.23% in San Diego (Rocha, D., Orraca, P., 2018). These numbers are not minimal and show the need for dialogue and understandings between education systems (Mungaray, A., 2016). Such effort would better the conditions of this population when crossing the border to access U.S. education.

A recent study conducted by the University of California, the *Colegio de la Frontera Norte* (COLEF, by its acronym in Spanish) in Tijuana, and the California school district Sweetwater, showed that 100% of the pupils in years nine and ten felt they were transborder due to the close connections to both sides. Also, of the pupils that have transited between both Mexican and U.S. education systems, 45% felt that language was a barrier in their school performance, 49% said that social integration was difficult, and 72% acknowledge that teachers helped them to overcome these adversities. Furthermore, pupils that have experienced the U.S. education system have more aspirations to get into Higher Education than those that only studied on the Mexican side (Floca, M., 2016).

Such a quantitative panorama of the universe of transborder residents, pupils, and students reflects the complexity of border crossers and dynamics shaped by policies and social practices throughout the history of this border. The numbers show a well-established demographic group living in a condition of simultaneity. Such unique conditions at this asymmetrical border and the new political context call for new approaches to increase the region's governance and conceptualisation.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

In this chapter, a historical account of the Cali-Baja region connection was provided to underscore the effects of policies on social configurations. The development of these intersections shaped the current transborder condition in the Cali-Baja border. For this reason, the stages after the establishment of the border were divided into political and social dimensions, to show the effect and reactions to each other. Before establishing the current geopolitical line of demarcation, this territory was first under the New Spain administration and later under Mexico's. However, it continued representing a challenge for the Mexican central government. The interaction with Europeans at those former borders formed strong economic ties that were later spaces for political influence. The loss of the northern territory as a consequence of the U.S.-Mexico war, is still considered an 'open wound'.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century elapsed, different political events shaped the immigration flux from Mexico and the U.S., and the border shifted from 'open' to 'closed'. The year 1917 is of particular importance as it reflects the harsh conditions of border control and social unconformities. Furthermore,



David Dorado's research shows the influence border fumigations conducted at El Paso had on Nazi practices. Carmelita Torres and other women protested against such humiliating and toxic practices since they suffered additional gender violence. Such an episode known as 'the bath riots', is one of the first accounts of border commuters protesting against mistreatment at a U.S. checkpoint. During the same year, additional enactments put in place discriminatory entering conditions for the first time. Mexicans were considered illegal, and a form of immigration document was imposed. However, Mexican working immigrants were still required in the U.S. for economic reasons.

World War II had a significant impact on U.S. industries. The Bracero Program was designed to bring Mexican immigrants to work in the impacted sectors with limited labour force available. The Bracero Program functioned as an immigration agreement for 22 years. When it ended, Mexican immigrants decided to stay in the U.S. or moved to the border regions to keep a circular dynamic. The *braceros* became the new border commuters that continued with the social reconfigurations at the Cali-Baja region.

In 1986, the U.S. government enacted IRCA to regularise immigrants' status accompanied by harsh border and migration policies. Operation Gatekeeper, in 1994, established the physical structure that divides both countries to this day. The walls and fences had multiple purposes, including immigration management. The hardship on border crossing pushed immigrants to permanently reside in the U.S. The disruption of circular immigration incremented the number of Mexican residents in the U.S. As a result, the Great Migration began. However, in 2005 the Great Expulsion commenced, triggered by the new political context post the terrorist attacks in New York City, the Great Recession, and a new deportation regime. Mexican immigrants returned to Mexico and some of them visited this country for the first time. This immigration flux has compelled Mexican institutions to respond adequately to the new social configurations. Baja California is the state where more returnees reside permanently. The statistics on transborder residents show how this population has been increasing, and approximately half of them are binational. This demographic picture adds complexity to the understanding of the region and its practices. The transborder condition results from the intersection of historical, political, and social practices still observable to this date.

### TRANSBORDERISM AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY:

#### Methodological Considerations

##### I. Introduction

In June 2017 the First Summit for Education Without Borders: Mexico-California took place in Mexico City. The Summit builds upon the UC-Mexico initiative 'Students We Share'. This initiative was materialised in a Symposium under the same name in 2016. Researchers from Mexico and California gathered to articulate the needs of pupils and students transiting between the Mexican and U.S. education systems. In the words of former Superintendent Thomas Torlakson, 'It is critical that we work together to provide support to students who end up attending schools in both California and Mexico so they are not left behind and can receive a world-class education' (Torlakson, T., 2017:1). This population is part of Generation 0.5 (Zúñiga, V., 2018) and a consequence of the Great Expulsion that began in 2005. The Great Expulsion was triggered by the combination of strict deportation policies and the U.S. Great Recession (Zúñiga, V. and Hamman, E., 2019). This new element in the Mexico-U.S. migration dynamic compelled institutions to respond accordingly with different approaches. The Summit was an effort that attempted to mitigate some of the most urgent challenges of this population. Furthermore, transborder students were briefly discussed during the Summit. Thus, I claim, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) entered into by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education, the California Department of Education, and the Regents of the University of California, serves as an overarching framework that could foster the development of transborder programmes for binational cooperation in education.

Based on the efforts made on transnational education, I became interested in transborderism and its binational implications in education at the Cali-Baja border. As stated previously, Iglesias Prieto (2011) defines transborderism as 'the frequency, intensity, directionality, and scale of crossing activities; the type of material and symbolic exchanges; and the social and cultural meanings attached to the interactions' (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2011:143). Iglesias Prieto (2018) continues, '[transborderism] entails more complex processes and subjects due to the fact they participate simultaneously in numerous geographic, social, cultural, and political spaces' (Iglesias, N. 2018:49). In other words, transborderism is a process, practice, and a condition where the state structure of the geopolitical border and its policies intersect with the sociocultural practices of the people living in the communities adjacently. Thus, it creates a 'thirdspace' (Soja, E., 1996), a transborder space where practices of simultaneity occur.

The present research strives to contribute to the theorisation of transborderism through the figure of the transborder pupil and student by focusing on their practices, and proposing a binational policy framework to address the challenges faced by this population in Cali-Baja region. Two clarifications are pertinent at this point: i) transborder pupils refer to young learners in pre-college education and

students refer to learners in higher education, however, the term learners in this thesis encompasses both figures and, ii) the purpose is not to prevent transborder practices to be carried out as these are considered endemic to the region, rather the scope is to better the conditions of this population by mitigating the challenges they face. Such an endeavour is in solidarity with the efforts to empower transborder identities and visibilize the challenges of their practices made by the transborder population along the Mexico-U.S. border. In this context, the empirical accounts stem from ethnographic methods and field immersions in the twin cities of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego divided into two field visits. The first one was conducted from December 2017 to February 2018. The second one was conducted from December 2018 to July 2019. The collected empirical accounts are the original wealth of data that deepens the study of transborderism and its practices through transborder pupils and students.

In this sense, the first part of the chapter focuses on developing the qualitative methodology, the mixed methods used, and provides a general overview of the research objectives and questions. In this section, my positionality is established in the insider-outsider status subsection and analysed, underscoring my vantage loci. The second part of the chapter focuses on the ethnographic methods, emphasising the concomitance of vulnerability and ethical concerns when researching the Cali-Baja border. The chapter also presents the limitations of the methods used when researching this geopolitical location, especially regarding the process of bodily border crossings. The last section gives an account of the data collection methods, data triangulation and further fieldwork reflections. Moreover, this chapter contributes to the overall discussion of researchers' adaptive capacities when bodily immersing on this border site, and the challenges that state policies represent when collecting data.

## **II. Developing the Methodology**

### II.I Insider-Outsider Status in a Transborder Context

There have been several challenges since the beginning of this project. The first one was my dual insider-outsider status, and the second was the limited amount of literature regarding transborder education and transborder learners in the Cali-Baja region. The latter is due to two reasons. First, even though the Mexico-U.S. border is one of the most studied ones, the narratives of documented border crossers, including children and young adults, are mostly missing. The focus at this border is posited on the undocumented immigration phenomenon and the subsequent border and migration surveillance policies. Second, the scholars that do look at transborderism do not focus on transborder pupils or students. Instead, they look more generally at the transborder population, including work commuters. In this sense, the direct accounts of transborder learners are mostly absent in the current border scholarship and invisible on the overall binational cooperation framework in education.

When I started to construct this research proposal in 2017, two main factors shaped it: my personal experience of growing up in Mexicali, a border city, and my professional experience as Chief of Department for International Cooperation with the Americas at the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico. These conditions were vantage points insofar as I had more than eighteen years of 'qualitative observations and experiences at the field of concern', several years effectively working in international cooperation, and designing and implementing international programmes in this field. I was never a transborder student while living in the border town of Mexicali. Nevertheless, I identify myself as a transborder resident based on the familiarity with the dynamic through close friends, family members, and constant bodily border crossings.

As stated briefly in the introduction of this research, growing up in Mexicali provided me with a unique understanding of 'living' the border. The fence that divided Mexicali and Calexico is one of the main symbols of the city essence. It represents multiple things to me: a different but very familiar country, friend's houses, the place where I shop for most of my groceries, the place of some of my favourite restaurants, and endless memories gathered throughout my life. The border fence also represents checkpoints, long waiting lines, enduring the harsh weather during the summer, having 'bad luck' and being sent to secondary revision, the sniffing dogs surrounding my car, being interrogated by U.S. CBP agents, and having repeated the phrases 'going to Wal-Mart', '*nada*' (in response to what are you bringing from Mexico today?), a million times over. My favourite response was 'Disneyland', which I was able to give once every other year when my family was able to take me to Disneyland in Anaheim. I also remember my parents always telling me as a child 'sit straight', 'do not speak', 'roll down the window', 'do not look nervous', 'do whatever they (CBP) tell you', in preparation for crossing the border and when approaching the checkpoints. To a certain extent, I needed to perform. They also explained why we had to behave a little differently in Calexico, the different transit rules, how to convert dollars to *pesos* in my mind, instantly, and expect to listen and read in English first.

In this context, when I think of my hometown, a mixture of complex images and information comes to mind that includes the international border as an important signifier of the city identity. To live the border is a notion hard to explain but is easy to grasp if coming from the Mexico-U.S. region. As a practitioner, I also researched the Mexico and the U.S. policies in education as part of the programmes I coordinated with the United States. Most of these programmes were on transnational education supporting the Mexican population living in the U.S. For instance, some programmes support Mexican pupils in public schools by helping them with extra classes in English language, U.S. history, and sciences. The programmes also included an approach with the Mexican parents to explain differences between Mexican and U.S. education systems, how to interact with teachers in U.S. schools, and how they can support their children in their academic journey. Coming from the border and with transborder friends studying in Calexico, I noticed that such challenges were also present in the transborder population in Mexicali. Yet, none of the programmes were directed to them. When working with California and in conversations with my Californian counterparts, it was confirmed that the programmes looked at transnational pupils but not at

transborder ones. However the binational cooperation between Mexico and California paved the way for developing programmes specifically for transborder learners. The signing of the MoU 'The Students We Share' mentioned previously confirmed that transborder education could be included in the negotiation binder.

In this sense, the information on border practices from a local perspective is relevant for this project as it integrates different sites, behaviours, and sociopolitical practices that are essential when looking at the Cali-Baja region. My knowledge of the binational framework in education is also relevant as it allowed me to think on feasible possibilities in policy, abiding by the current binational cooperation framework. However, such a vantage point also represented shortcomings, particularly when looking at my own biases, normalised assumptions of transborder practices, and hierarchisation of challenges to be addressed based on personal experiences. Thus, systematic research on transborderism through the accounts of former transborder pupils and students was pivotal for this work.

Since the beginning of this project, but particularly during the effective time conducting fieldwork, I reflected on the transitioning from practitioner to researcher. This exercise is referred to as endogenous reflexivity by Tim May and Beth Perry (2011), underscoring the role that the researcher's experiences and preconceptions play in fieldwork. As stated previously, the region of research is home to me. Furthermore, my professional experience in binational cooperation in education allowed me to reflect on Mexico and California's shared responsibility for the transborder demographic population. However, before going into public service within the Mexican government, I worked at the Mexicali-Calexico deportation port with The International Organization for Migration (IOM), part of the United Nations (UN). My job consisted of providing humanitarian aid to Mexicans undergoing deportation events by the U.S. CBP enforcement. This population were of all ages and under different conditions. The programme's scope was to provide a safe return to the communities of origin including children, to provide medical attention if needed, reiterate immigrants' rights, to remove them from any exploitation scheme such as modern slavery, and human and sex trafficking. One of the methods used was face to face interviews with the immigrants. For this, I received training on conducting interviews and effective methods when working with a vulnerable population. By the end of the programme, I had interviewed more than 3,000 immigrants at this PoE.

In the words of Burnham, 'the researcher observes a phenomenon that he or she feels is interesting, puzzling, neglected or difficult to understand, and then speculates about its possible causes. Naturally, the researcher's training and culture help that person to develop several possible explanations...' (Burnham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W., and Layton-Henry, Z., 2004:31). It is precisely the convergence of my professional and personal experiences, as Burnham points out, that this research originated and developed throughout the following years.

The insider or outsider status poses a tension between these contradictory terms, with many arguments in favour and against it (Serrant-Green, L., 2002). Insider researcher refers to the project conducted by a member of the population that is being researched (Kanuha, V., 2000), sharing

specific sociocultural characteristics (language and identity) or other common experiences (Asselin, M., 2003). As an insider, the researcher has more access and acceptance within the participants, translating into more in-depth accounts and data (Corbin, S. and Buckle, J., 2009). In some cases, membership is the only way to get access to a certain population. However, an insider researcher also holds a stigma for possible biases. As Asselin (2003) argues, the researcher can potentially gather and analyse data not as a researcher but as a group member. Moreover, the researcher could assume the participants' accounts are similar to their own, posing a problem for data coding. Moreover, this confused and clouded view can affect the overall analysis and discerning of the data (Corbin, S. and Buckle, J., 2009).

In contrast, the outsider researcher does not hold a membership to the group of research. Such distance allows the researcher to observe and analyse data with a clearer view not clouded with emotions, connections or pre-existing perceptions. The motives for conducting research will remain clear with the capability of acquiring a broader perspective of the issue, detecting patterns and other external influences (Fay, B. 1996, Corbin, S. and Buckle, J., 2009). The outsider has the 'privilege' of possessing objectivity.

The insider-outsider status has costs and benefits that are carefully considered. However, it is simplistic to think that researchers are categorised by binary approaches, either insider or outsider. Due to the complex essence, the researcher holds similarities and differences with the participants. Therefore, a dialectic approach becomes rather pertinent, 'In a dialectical approach, differences are not conceived as absolute, and consequently the relation between them is not one of utter antagonism' (Fay, B., 1996: 224). Fay's observations add complexity to the researcher's position, to the field of study, and in relation to the participants. In this sense, to be an outsider does not make a researcher incapable of pertinent deep observations and reflections. To be an insider does not guarantee a biased and lax data analysis. The tension between the insider and the outsider is not resolved but rather captured by the hyphen between binary entities. The hyphen 'acts as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction' (Corbin, S. and Buckle, J., 2009: 60). It is on this hyphen that insider-outsider researchers, like myself, are locate.

Instead of aiming to resolve such insider-outsider tension, I embraced it and, hopefully, creatively worked with it. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore the practicalities of my familiarity with the geographical places of research. My knowledge of the exact protocols for border crossing and the type of visa I hold helped me plan interviews on both sides of the border, to calculate the time it would take me to cross it, and the budget required per travel. Also, I was aware of the weather conditions, especially in Mexicali, where the temperature rises to fifty degrees during the summer. While conducting fieldwork, Tijuana ranked as the most dangerous city in Mexico (Heras, A., 2020). Therefore, I only transited on familiar streets for my safety. I was a researcher that knew her way around the cities and managed to make contact with potential gatekeepers that would grant me access to this specific border subgroup.

I also used my membership in the region to create a familiar environment for the participants by speaking Spanish, English, and Spanglish. I also mentioned to them some commonalities, mostly related to the urban landscape and the border crossing practices. I would then disclose that I was not part of their subgroup but quite familiarised with it. Fortunately, they shared valuable experiences in detail as we built rapport.

Throughout the entire fieldwork, I kept reminding myself to wear the 'researcher hat'. This exercise allowed me to reposition myself as the researcher and not dwell on my life at the border. Fieldwork notes helped with this task where I annotated my observations regarding practices through a critical lens. I also practised this constant repositioning during the interviews by asking 'obvious' questions to the participants about the city and the border crossing infrastructure.

This tension as an insider-outsider also made me expand the area of fieldwork to thicken my outsider status. I did so by conducting interviews in Tijuana-San Diego as well. Although these are not unfamiliar to me, without a doubt, the cities have a different essence and history than Mexicali-Calexico that influenced transborder dynamics. This decision allowed me to have a more complex grasp of transborderism and determine patterns based on the accounts of two different geographical places. Furthermore, it helped me develop an inter-city analysis of transborder practices between Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego within the same region.

The personal and professional experience is relevant in my endogenous reflexivity as it provided the tools to conduct interviews at the Cali-Baja border. The multiple experiences prevented me from approaching the site with a narrow-minded view. Furthermore, I created my own 'border research philosophy and practice' based on personal and professional parameters explained in the following subsections.

## II.II Research Questions and Data Gathering Overview

As stated, this research results from the convergence of personal interests and professional experiences that seek to grasp the transborder reality in the Cali-Baja region. In this context, the objectives of this qualitative research are:

- (i) To contribute to the theorisation of transborderism through the figure of transborder pupils and students at the Cali-Baja region
- (ii) To underscore the importance of transborder practices with academic purposes when looking at the Mexico-U.S. border region
- (iii) To determine a practical instrument of binational cooperation in education between Mexico and California to address the challenges faced by transborder learners at the Cali-Baja region

The research questions that motivated this work are the following:

- (i) Why is transborderism practiced via education in the border twin cities of Mexicali/Calexico and Tijuana/San Diego?

- (ii) What are the challenges faced by transborder pupils and students in their transborder practice?
- (iii) Is it possible to implement a practical transborder framework in the current binational relations in education?

In this context, the research puts forward three initial claims: i) the bodily process of border crossing is the most challenging part of the transborder practice, ii) transborder pupils and students at the Cali-Baja are learners shared by Mexico and California and, iii) the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) entered into by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education, the California Department of Education and the Regents of the University of California, serves as an overarching framework to develop transborder programmes in education.

To answer the questions and claims driving this doctoral research, the methodology developed consisted of mixed methods with an ethnographic bend conducted with the participation of twenty-four former transborder pupils and three current transborder students in the Cali-Baja region, two stakeholders interviews in Mexico City with Mexican policymakers in international education, one interview with a prominent Mexico-U.S. border scholar, field observations in four border cities (Mexicali, Calexico, Tijuana, San Diego) and two additional Mexican cities (Guadalajara and Mexico City), and the policy analysis of the binational framework of cooperation in education between Mexico and California. The reasons for not interviewing pupils currently enrolled in U.S. public schools were related to ethical concerns as they are minors and could potentially be affected if the school authorities realised their residency location. In addition, the need to have a parent present during the interview could have limited the number of participants. However, the participants' ages varied, providing accounts of the experiences through different periods of times. For instance, a senior participant shared her account on Calexico's border closing when President J.F. Kennedy was killed in 1963, and the youngest is eighteen years old currently attending college studies in Calexico. To analyse former pupils' narratives is essential as these explore the challenges they faced as minors that are still observable today.

An extended account of data gathering and analysis is provided in the next section of the chapter. However, the data collection and triangulation was conducted in the following order:

1. Baseline fieldwork exploration. This exercise consisted of the first field visit of three months for research purposes from December 2017 to February 2018. I travelled to Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego, where I met with former transborder pupils and students whom I contacted previously via social media. During this first field visit, I conducted exploratory questions with them. The purpose of this exercise was to understand more in-depth the way transborderism is practised and part of the challenges present in such dynamic. Sampling and participants' recruitment process was also explored and determined at this stage. To sense the pulse of the field allowed me to develop successful methods for further data collecting.



2. Extended Fieldwork. This effort consisted of seven months of field immersion in Mexicali, Calexico, Tijuana, and San Diego. I also travelled to Mexico City to conduct interviews with stakeholders from December 2018 to July 2019.

2.1 In-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews lasted an average of two hours and ten minutes, and were audio recorded. The interviews were conducted in Mexicali, Calexico, Tijuana, San Diego, and Guadalajara. One interview was conducted virtually.

2.2 Field observations. Throughout the field visit, I crossed the border through all the Ports of Entry that were part of the participant's narratives. After the 40th time, I stopped counting the number of times I crossed the border. A log of field observations and thoughts was kept while conducting this process. Attention was paid to the infrastructure, the questions asked by the U.S. CBP officers, the waiting times, the faces of border commuters and the length of the trajectories. I also visited about 90% of the schools that the participants attended by foot, public transportation or car to better understand their commute.

2.3 Stakeholders interviews. I travelled to Mexico City and interviewed two Mexican policymakers from two different key Secretariats in charge of the current binational programmes in education. Furthermore, I held a conversation with scholar Iglesias Prieto who is prominent in border and transborder studies at San Diego State University.

In total, I carried out ten months of fieldwork at the twin cities of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. The geographical locations are of personal interest paired with important characteristics of the area that justify its epistemological relevance. For instance: (i) the Tijuana-San Diego border is the most crossed one in the world with approximately 25,000 crossings per day and, (ii) together, Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego have the highest number of transborder pupils and students, that is, 16,287 students (SEGOB, 2016). In the following sections, I provide an extended account of each step undertaken.

### **III. A Transborder Ethnographic Bend**

In social sciences, to produce knowledge is to deeply understand people's everyday practices in a particular field or setting, the meanings created in the process, and its relation to the world. In this sense, ethnographic methods are pivotal for exploring, analysing and, connecting field data to an overarching social paradigm and scholarship. In the words of John D. Brewer (2000):

'[Ethnography is] the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally' (Brewer, J., 2000:312).

The Mexico-U.S. border is a complex site where different subjects and practices converge. However, border scholars (Vélez-Ibañez, C., 1999, Heyman, J., 2017, Iglesias Prieto, N., 2011, Dear, M., and

Leclerc, G., 2013, Chávez, S., 2016), have successfully conducted or implemented ethnographic methods in this region with particular emphasis on its sociocultural practices and distinctive processes of integration. Such scholars' work is paramount for the contemporary understanding of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands that has suffered from 'myopia' as undocumented migration and border policing have been the primary foci. This research additionally contributes to expanding the understanding of the region by looking at documented border commuters.

Based on the aforementioned, ethnographically informed methods were implemented during the interviews with the participants. The objective of ethnographers is to portray, illustrate, and describe the sociocultural elements relevant to the topic. Moreover, providing 'thick descriptions' of the field was essential (Geertz, C., 1973). Overall, the ethnographic bend approach contributed to the analysis of the participants' perspectives (Bailey, C., 2007).

In this sense, to empirically analyse transborderism through such an approach is relevant for the following reasons:

- i) Deep understanding of transborderism through daily practices. Through an ethnographic bend approach, it is possible to understand the complexity of transborder practices, and the way these are explicitly conducted. In this vein, it is possible to discuss how the border is navigated and mediated. Moreover, the particular challenges this population face as part of their dynamic become more visible. These challenges contributed to understanding the difficulties of transborderism, analysing border commuters' heterogeneity, and discussing the hardship of transiting the Cali-Baja region. The accounts of the participants also contributed to a phenomenological understanding of the border and transborderism. Furthermore, such empirical data posits relevance to the transborder pupil or student figure that has been only scholarly mentioned without fully immersing in their transborder enactments. This effort also brings additional consistency to the subject of a transborder learner.
- ii) Understand the effects of transborderism in different spaces. Through the participants' in-depth accounts, it is possible to detect and reflect on the different sites where pupils and students carry out their transborder practices. To discuss the importance of such spaces and the different ways these are navigated, it is relevant to further the theorisation of transborderism. Although transborderism is understood as a dynamic and circular process, it is important to understand the effect of each site on the transborder practices and vice versa. Such exercise underscores the role of family or household dynamics, U.S. checkpoints, school policies, and the local community. In this sense, it is possible to analyse the ways transborderism shapes sites and how the dynamic of such sites also shapes transborder identities and practices.
- iii) The ability to compare the empirical information gathered through participants in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. This inter-city analysis within the Cali-Baja region also enriches the theorisation of transborderism and of the region. By looking at differences and commonalities, it was possible to detect patterns of behaviour in different sites. It was also possible to reflect on various factors that affect transborder practices, such as the weather, modes of commuting, and

the urban layout. For instance, in Mexicali, the local community is more involved with transborder pupils than in Tijuana. Such analysis illustrates the linkages of transborderism with its particular context as opposed to a generalised idea of transborderism along the Mexico-U.S. border. Moreover, this inter-city analysis is the first of its kind as no comparative studies within the Cali-Baja border have been conducted previously concerning transborder learners.

iv) Lastly, the empirical information is relevant to develop innovative public policies and binational instruments that could pertinently address this population's challenges. By understanding the different ways people on both sides of the border are connected through such important practices, governmental co-responsibility programmes can be developed. Such innovative policies should be empirically informed by the local dynamics and challenges instead of just considering quantitative data when looking at the Mexico-U.S. border. Appropriate programmes would contribute to the overall building of border governance by including and understanding local practices as part of the Mexico-U.S. border narratives and discussions.

In this context, field observations were also relevant for this work as one essential element is the analysis of the border checkpoints where cameras and cell phones are prohibited. Additionally, and since the intention was to understand transborder practices as much as possible, the participants were asked to first give an account of a regular day from the moment they woke up when pupils or students. Attention was then put on four different observation sites: 'At Home', 'Border Crossing Checkpoints', 'At School', 'Back to the Family House'. These four sites are the most mentioned spaces of relevance in the participant's narratives.

The site of 'At Home' refers to two main things. First, it consists of the routine before getting to the land Port of Entry that includes waking up and breakfast. This information shows an element of challenge in their narratives. Waking up at 3:00 to 5:00 am as a pupil, can affect school performances. The second element analysed at this site was the reason for becoming transborder stemming from the parents understanding of the border and, transnational and local immigration. By discussing the participant's reasons as to why they were enrolled in U.S. schools, it is possible to understand the motivations behind their transborder practice. These motivations provided a purpose for their transborder dynamic.

The 'Border Crossing Checkpoints' site refers to the dynamic on the land Ports of Entry in Mexicali and Tijuana. This site is a critical one comprising of two main moments. The first one analyses the trajectory, ecology, and sociocultural practices while lining up to cross the border either by foot or car. The analysis includes waiting times, border hacks, emotions, violence, notions of time, and the social interactions particular to the border checkpoints. This information helps us to understand this space that is rarely phenomenologically analysed, in spite of being the most challenging part of the transborder dynamic. The second moment of analysis at the lands Ports of Entry is the actual process of transiting the checkpoints that include the interaction with U.S. CBP officers, performances to increase political trustworthiness, and the use of technology to scan documents, backpacks, and lunch boxes. This data shows the site's complexity and the variety of sub-processes that are experienced daily.

The third site is 'At School' that refers to the commute from the checkpoint once in Calexico or San Diego, and school practices such as language instructions and pedagogies. It also discusses border enhancement practices in one particular school in Calexico, where CBP officers conduct chasings of undocumented border crossers. The analysis of this site is relevant as it reflects on the second leg of the commute on the U.S. side and the ways transborderism is enacted in a school setting. It also shows that U.S. schools located at the border with transborder pupils do not acknowledge the region reality nor the challenging dynamic of this population. This raises questions concerning discriminatory and surveilling practices inside schools that affect transborder learners. Moreover, the analysis also reflects on the limited parental presence in schools that are also mediated by the border and how it can affect school performances.

The last site is 'Back to the Family House' that comprises the commute from school to the checkpoints to enter Mexico, the interaction with the community during this commute, and after school activities, including parents' role when doing homework. This information is relevant as it analyses how transborderism continues impacting these pupils and students throughout the day, the differences between northbound and southbound crossings, the interactions with the community after school, and extracurricular activities essential at formative stages. Regarding homework, the language limitations of some of the parents also represent a challenge for such pupils affecting school marks.

Overall, researching the Mexico-U.S. border is no easy task. It comes with different challenges for the researcher and the participants as it is a highly militarised and surveilled region. Furthermore, limitations based on immigration controls and documentation play a role in the choice of methods. Data storage was also a concern when crossing the border constantly as CBP officers can access the devices of any border crosser. It is then essential to reflect on vulnerability, ethical considerations, and different hardships encountered during fieldwork in this context.

### III.I The Concomitance of Vulnerability and Ethics in Border Research

To conduct research with ethnographic methods at the border has its particular challenges. The conventional social approach of 'methodological nationalism' insists on considering the nation-state as politically, socially, and culturally delimiting. The study of transnationalism and migration stands in contrast to such a mononational approach (Ochoa, A., Deeds, C. and Whiteford, S., 2013). Furthermore, the continuous enforcement of policies regarding the securitising and surveillance of the border have impacted the methods and methodology that researchers use on this site. For instance, 90% of the twenty-seven former transborder pupils or students participating in this research were binational. These participants expressed feeling with the capacity to defend themselves against U.S. CBP officers. They also admitted that such sentiment would not be the same if they were only

Mexican nationals. Being aware of their rights as citizens became an important element in the development of coping mechanisms regarding border crossing practices.

Another challenge when researching the Mexico-U.S. border is its changing vocation. Border state practices such as policing and people management reflect the policies developed by the central governments. However, these policies impact the people living in this region and the border dynamic. For instance, the San Ysidro Port was closed on 25 November 2018, after members of the Central American Immigrant Caravan attempted to cross to the U.S. This border closure could have potentially unfolded a series of border closures if tensions had continued. Transborder students, especially those in San Diego State University, demanded a mitigation plan that could support them. The institution then released a statement offering housing support to the students and staff affected by border closures. In the context of the Cali-Baja region, the transborder community is more visible and vocal today about their rights and political stands. However, the most emblematic political event that changed border practices permanently in this region was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001. This event was overwhelmingly present in the narratives of all the participants of this research.

The participants were hyperaware of the 'before and after' of border practices in the Mexico-U.S. border. One of the questions in the interviews was: approximately, how much time daily did it take you to cross the border to the U.S.? The answers automatically related to this event. Those participants that were already former transborder pupils in 2001 underscored that the answers corresponded to a pre-9/11 dynamic where things were 'easier'. Those participants who were transborder students at the time of the event in 2001 divided the answer into two as there was a significant change in waiting times and CBP officers' conduct. Those participants that became transborder students after the terrorist attacks began to answer by establishing that their experiences belonged to a post-9/11 border process. This event changed the way the Cali-Baja region border was experienced.

Unexpected events, domestic or international, impact the border and subsequently change the way transborderism is enacted. The dynamism of the border is a condition to take into consideration when researching the region. In this sense, in 2009 and 2010, the binational conference 'Between the Lines: Border Research Ethics and Methods (BREM)' was celebrated in the U.S. Through a series of workshops, the objective of the BREM was to bring together researchers that focus on the border and immigration phenomenon. The BREM conference also called for papers that explored the difficulties, contingencies, tensions, and dilemmas of the methods used while researching the Mexico-U.S. border. The papers showed that researchers had adaptive capacities to cope with unexpected situations that involved different binational stakeholders and sociocultural differences. Furthermore, the researchers shared the creative solutions that supported the research (Ochoa, A., Deeds, C. and Whiteford, S., 2013).

The BREM represented the particularities and challenges when researching the border, including working with a vulnerable population such as undocumented immigrants. As stated previously, research at the border tends to focus mostly on undocumented immigrants and migration.

The undocumented condition is one of the components of vulnerability that led researchers to assume that a documented border crosser is not a vulnerable subject. However, as this research argues, the transborder population, especially pupils, are vulnerable as well.

Jorge Bustamante (2002) defines vulnerability as 'a social condition of powerlessness ascribed to individuals with certain characteristics that are perceived to deviate from those ascribed to the prevailing definitions of a national' (Bustamante, J., 2002:340). This definition relates to undocumented immigrants. However, it is necessary to expand the concept of vulnerability in the context of the border. Bustamante, drawing from Howard S. Becker (1968), underscores the power differentials between populations as the defining condition of vulnerability (Bustamante, J., 2002, Martínez, D., Slack, J. and Vandervoet, P., 2013). The power differentials experienced daily by transborder pupils and students, *vis-a-vis* U.S. CBP officers, put them in a position of acute disadvantage.

The access granted to enter the U.S. is not a neutral decision, rather, the process consists of crisscrossing databases and subjective estimation of the U.S. CBP officer mediating the access. The latter is highly problematic as the officers' opinions could be potentially charged with racial biases, increasing the dangers for border crossers regardless of their nationality. From January 2010 to March 2020, more than one hundred people have died under U.S. CBP custody, including at Ports of Entry along the Mexico-U.S. border. In contrast, zero people have died crossing southbound to Mexico (SBCC, 2020). The usual aggressiveness has a pervasive impact on the transborder population, including young learners with normalised structural border violence. For instance, 90% of the participants crossed the border unaccompanied when they were pupils. In other words, they were unaccompanied children crossing an international border. Only two participants were victims of direct violence from a U.S. CBP while commuting to school. Twenty-six felt nervous while crossing the border daily. The most common reason for such nervousness was entrance denial.

Furthermore, twenty-five participants had a negative experience with U.S. CBP officers during their lifetime. Researchers conducting fieldwork can also experience such hardship personally and through the participants. In this sense, a working group from the BREM Conference was especially concerned with creating a Code of Personal Ethics for Border Researchers incorporating the ethical considerations when researching the border (Ochoa, A., Deeds, C. and Whiteford, S., 2013), that included both the researcher and the participant.

After the Nazi regime, ethical concerns rose due to the well-known biomedical abuses in Nazi experiments. Social sciences share such concerns of exploiting vulnerable population 'in the name of science'. For example, two famous experiments showed complete disregard for the participants' wellbeing. The first one is the Tearoom Trade, in which Laud Humphrey misled approximately one hundred participants into public homosexual encounters under false claims by the researcher (Finch, J., and Hernández, C., 2013). The second example is the Stanford Prison Experiment, conducted in 1971 by Philip Zimbardo, a Stanford psychology professor. The two-week experiment recreated 'real

prison life conditions' for the college students participating. The group was divided into guards and prisoners after conducting a series of tests. The participants immersed themselves in the roles to a degree whereby psychological violence was inflicted on the prisoners while resisting mistreatment from the guards. The experiment was stopped on the sixth day. Of the fifty observers, only one person raised critical concerns. For instance, what would happen if one 'guard' and one 'prisoner' meet on the outside world? In college? When the researcher treats the participant with complete disregard for their lives and the risks involved, this undoubtedly raises ethical concerns (Levy, P., 2017). With regards to this research, the ethical implications of the participants and the researcher were present since the beginning. The main ethical concerns were: i) the limited data protection when crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, ii) the nature of the narratives shared by the participants and, iii) the risk the researcher posed to the participants by association and vice versa. The following paragraphs explain such concerns.

In 2018, U.S CBP implemented a policy to conduct searches on international travellers' devices, including laptops and smartphones at airports and land Ports of Entry. All border crossers, including U.S. citizens, could be subject to being searched. With figures by The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), searches on devices increased 400%, affecting more than 33,000 travellers in 2018 alone (Schwartz, M., 2019). This search policy endangered the data collected as it could be accessed, removed, and copied from my device as per U.S. CBP request. Since the interviews were planned to be conducted on both sides of the border, this policy meant that U.S. CBP could access my devices, including the audio recordings. If so, data protection could be breached. In addition, the participant would be put at risk due to the nature of the narratives that included encounters with U.S. CBP officers.

For this reason, a data protection protocol was created and implemented after every interview conducted in the U.S. to minimise the risks. The voice recordings were uploaded to a personal cloud storage account immediately after the interview. Then, the app of such account was deleted from my device. With regards to the consent forms, these were folded and placed inside a book for dissimulation. However, I would cross the border with a notebook filled with field observations and handwritten notes that could have affected my immigration status if considered a security threat by U.S. CBP officers.

The nature of the narratives shared by a subgroup of seven participants included fraudulent mechanisms to access public education by falsely claiming residency in a certain school district. U.S. CBP could penalise those involved in such mechanisms if accessing this information even when being former pupils. The seven participants experienced a series of practices destined to uncover 'fraudulent' enrolled pupils. In the Mexico-U.S. border context, a fraudulent pupil is one that provided false documentation to have access to state public education. The legal consequences of such act range from a penalisation fee to parent imprisonment. To minimise the risk to the subgroup and those pupils enrolled in U.S. public schools, only former pupils were interviewed. Although the present research can potentially bring visibility to this ongoing border practice, it does not provide new information of interest for school districts authorities nor for U.S. CBP officers at the Ports of Entry.

Moreover, the names of the public schools were not mentioned during the interviews. Furthermore, the focus of this research is the general acknowledgement of transborder practices and implications that transborder pupils and students face in the Cali-Baja border.

Lastly, the interviews posed an immigration risk to the researcher and the participant by association. The participants only knew that I was a researcher from Goldsmiths, University of London, interested in transborder subjects' experiences. By agreeing to participate, we both ran the risk of being associated with each other. If the people involved are considered a subject of concern by the U.S. CBP, such association's repercussions can vary. Binational participants could be questioned at the PoE or even have the SENTRI<sup>7</sup> removed. The latter can also be the case for those with only Mexican nationality.

Furthermore, the visas could be removed by the U.S. CBP authorities. This was the case of one participant who had her and her son's SENTRI removed by being associated with a former partner's friend. Another participant had a similar situation with her husband. I could have my visa removed discretionally by a U.S. CBP officer at any point since I only hold Mexican nationality. In such a case, the fieldwork would have been interrupted, limiting the number of observations and participants. Furthermore, it could have impacted my family and future professional horizons. With this risk constantly in mind, the interview with a school principal was cancelled.

On 22 June 2018, a school principal was detained by Mexicali authorities due to a transit violation. He was stopped and found in possession of two hundred doses of a drug called 'ice'. He argued that the drugs were placed by the police to damage his reputation. He was released after the police determined that the substances in his possession were not drugs (Díaz, M., 2018). He is the principal of an important school in Calexico. This school is relevant for this research since ten of the participants attended the institution. The school is also an emblematic institution at the Calexico-Mexicali border. Four of the participants brought to my attention the drug incident. After carefully assessing the situation, it was decided to cancel the interview and only use the school's website for information. To mitigate this decision, further questions were asked to the alumni participating in this research regarding school programmes and environment. This decision was taken after much thought and assessing the reasons for and against it. At that moment, the border political environment and the confrontations of the Central American Migrant Caravan in the region also influenced such a decision.

Vulnerabilities and ethical implications are concomitant when conducting transborder or binational border research. In the case of the present work, a specific protocol for data protection was developed due to recent border search policies by the U.S. government. Further

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<sup>7</sup> SENTRI stands for 'Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection'. SENTRI is a CBP programme that 'allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travellers upon arrival in the United States. All applicants undergo a rigorous background check and in-person interview before enrolment' (CBP, 2020). When approved and paid, the traveller, including U.S. citizens, get an identification card that grants access to specific designated lanes at the Ports of Entry along the Mexico-U.S. border. The advantage of being approved for SENTRI is an important reduction of the waiting times.



decisions were made to protect the participants, the researcher, and the fieldwork. The potential repercussions for participants and researchers require creative solutions to effectively address the challenges in a space where legal frameworks and immigration policies intersect.

## **I. Data Collection, Analysis and Fieldwork Observations**

To conduct fieldwork is not a mere visit and observation of a geographical location but rather the navigation of a particular social space (Clifford, J., 1997). Fieldwork suffered a reflexive turn in the 1980s (Marcus, G., 2009) concerning the researcher's role, power dynamics, and data collection in social sciences. This reflexive approach denotes 'the ability of locating yourself in the picture' (Fook, J., 1999:11). To research the Cali-Baja region entailed having the skills to work with a battery of complexities inherent to this space without losing sight of one's location.

My personal and professional experience in the region granted access to four former transborder learners in advance. I knew to an extent the hardship of the particular border crossing practice in Mexicali-Calexico. However, the whole dynamic of the situation and the subsequent repercussions were unknown to me. Moreover, I was also interested in transborder students' experiences in public schools, as these four participants attended private education. With this in mind, a baseline fieldwork visit was strategic to the further design of effective fieldwork.

The baseline exercise consisted of observing and exploring the field with a researcher 'hat'. The informal conversations with the first four participants helped me to (re)approach the fieldwork location. Five other transborder students conducted a local seminar in Tijuana where I listened to experiences and narratives related to transborder practices. The participants were members of the Transfronterizo Alliance Student Organization (TASO), the first transborder student-led organisation in the region and supported by San Diego State University. The objective of TASO, created in February 2017, is to raise awareness of transborder students and their particular challenges. TASO presented the objectives of the organisation for the first time and the relevance of being a grassroots initiative.

The students in the panel, four women and one man, shared experiences related to border crossings and challenges in U.S. schools. They all agreed on the invisibility of transborder students and the way such a situation impacts school policies. This event took place at a coffee shop located in *CalleRevolución (La Revo)* in Tijuana. This street has a political and cultural weight for transborder inhabitants, immigrants, and overall, Tijuana's history. On this particular street, most U.S. visitors mix with Mexicans. Shop employees speak English, and both currencies are accepted in any commerce. *La Revo* is a social and cultural space where both countries meet.

The first field immersion determined the main axes for further field research. Mainly with regards to the parental approach to transborderism, border crossing practices, and school policies. Furthermore, an interesting element was present in all the narratives of these first participants, the

role of border waiting times. This deep and complex understanding of the border dynamic is reflected in adapted routines to the uncertainties of waiting times at the checkpoints. The second field visit was designed on the observations, and the new data gathered throughout the three months.

Taking the first data collected into consideration, the questions for future interviews were developed. The second field visit was undertaken for a total of seven months. Several discussions with other researchers regarding the method and settings for conducting the interviews were held. It was advised to explore alternative methods for future interviews. For example, it was suggested to cross the border with the participants while listening to their narratives. However, the risks of this method would deter participants due to the high policing and surveilling at the PoEs.

Furthermore, the different types of visas would only allow me to interview people holding the same visa as mine, limiting the number of eligible participants. Again, the high level of surveillance and hardship at the land Ports of Entry had to be considered. After deep consideration of the site and the methods, it was decided that in-depth interviews on places agreed by the participants would be pertinent. The in-depth conversation would cover border crossings in detail. The site chosen by the participant would give a sense of safety and comfort. The first challenge was to look for people interested in participating in this research.

Regarding the call for participants, a simple flyer calling for transborder students or former pupils was designed. It specified the interest from the researcher in the experience as transborder population. The flyer was in English and Spanish. It was shared via social media by the former transborder students met during the first field visit. The response exceeded initial expectations. More than fifty former transborder pupils or students contacted me in total, of which I met with twenty-six. Only one was via skype. The rest of the people that contacted me lost interest after exchanging one or two emails.

The respondents were mostly former transborder pupils that attended private schools. Only seven went to state public schools. However, 90% of the people that contacted me initially and lost interest afterwards, attended public schools. Twenty-one of them are women, and only six are men, which is an important demographic characteristic. Such a characteristic calls for further research on gendered transborderism and border practices. However, the narratives analysed in further chapters provide an account for the sexual harassment endured particularly by female transborder pupils and students during this dynamic. Data collection at this border location has to consider several factors that can affect such endeavour.

To conduct experimental methods to research the Mexico-U.S. border requires creativity and adaptability. However, all are doomed to fail if the researcher does not understand the binational context where the participants live. For instance, and as stated previously, I could not cross the border with the participants as several anxieties come into play in such a scenario. Border surveillance, including cameras and microphones, the types of visas, and lanes for border crossing, feed such anxieties. If a participant accepts a method that puts him or her at risk, it raises ethical, safety, and methodological concerns.

Furthermore, the researcher is at risk of collecting false data as the U.S. authorities utilise a vast range of technologies recording the activities near and at the border, including microphones and cameras. This heavy surveillance affects our behaviour at the border. One of the participants, a U.S. citizen, said that she deletes Facebook and WhatsApp in her device every time she is sent to secondary revision.

The land Ports of Entry and border crossings are perceived as dangerous, as shown in the following empirical chapters. The securitisation of the border and immigration status prevented a full immersion in the literal border crossing dynamic with the participants. In the case of this research, they preferred to share such experiences in detail on either side of the border without crossing it together. Only one of them agreed to cross the border southbound by car. Two participants asked me to meet in their offices. The rest of the participants decided to be interviewed at coffee shops or restaurants near the border line. In this sense, field observations while crossing the border by myself became essential to this research. A log with the number of border crossings and relevant observations was kept. The combination of the interviews and field observations provided deeper and complex reflections on this transborder space.

The in-depth interviews conducted consisted of a set of open-ended questions compartmentalised in four sections: the parent's motivation to enrol them in a U.S. school, a walk through a regular day as a transborder pupil, border crossing waiting times, practices, and encounters with U.S. CBP officers before and after the terrorist attacks in 2001. Moreover, school practices related to transborder practices were also pertinent to explore.

The interviews began with an introduction of myself and the scope of the research. My Mexican nationality and local residency were then established. The objective of the research was set, followed by an explanation and signing of the consent form. The dissemination of the data was explained at a later stage. Such an introductory phase was conducted in Spanish and English to show familiarity with local code-switching and jargon. It was also established that the answers could be in both languages if needed. Such a short statement had a positive effect on the participants as they relaxed and provided high-quality data. Making this connection with the participants was crucial, and they effectively mixed Spanish and English in the narratives. The use of Spanglish was a sign of rapport and trust with the participants. After collecting a substantial amount of data, the next endeavour was coding it.

As stated previously, one of the risks of using ethnographic methods is data misinterpretation and biased analysis. The information provided by the participants is not neutral but rather shaped by each context. This posed an important challenge regarding data validation. In this sense, it was essential to triangulate the information. Colin Robson (2002) defines triangulation as 'the use of multiple resources to enhance the rigour of the research' (2002:174). Triangulation is always a challenging endeavour. Two strategies were implemented to triangulate the collected data. The first one was related to data triangulation through the participants. The second strategy was the data triangulation with governmental authorities and a local transborder scholar. Both methods of

triangulation were done protecting the participant's anonymity. In addition, field observations and primary experiences on the sites mentioned in the narratives contributed to the data validation.

Two in-person interviews with stakeholders were conducted as part of data triangulation and to supplement data collection. In this sense, I interviewed policymakers within the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE). These key public servants have a certain level of influence in the decision making on, in this case, binational cooperation in education. Besides data triangulation, the interviews had the additional objective to explore the feasibility of binational cooperation that could benefit transborder learners. My previous job within the Mexican government granted me access to both of the stakeholder's interviews more easily. After exchanging a few emails over one month, I flew to Mexico City to conduct the interviews in person.

The first stakeholder interview was conducted with the Chief of Department of Cooperation with America in the Directorate General for International Relations (DGRI) within the Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico. This Department has the objective to develop and strengthen the international policies of cooperation in education to benefit the country's development. For this, Mexico collaborates with other governmental units and foreign governments to exchange good practices and develop joint programmes. Mexico and the U.S. work closely to better the Mexican diaspora, especially with regards to the population located in California. One of the Chief of Department for America's tasks is to develop binational programmes of cooperation and coordinate them. In this sense, it was important to determine if the binational programmes included transborder pupils and students. The answer was no. The public servant even said that he did not know about the existence of this population. Such invisibility in the binational framework coincided with the participants' narratives about Mexican authorities' null support. However, it was also established how they could be included in further binational programmes and the steps needed for such a scenario.

The second stakeholder interview was conducted with a high-level public servant in the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, to be precise, to the Deputy Director General of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME). The Institute's objective is to develop strategies, programmes, among other mechanisms, for the benefit of Mexicans residing abroad. The importance of IME in the context of this research relies on two main factors. The first is that most challenges faced by transborder pupils and students happen on U.S. territory. The second fact refers to the student's Mexican nationality. Therefore, the transborder population's academic journey and rights should be of concern to the Mexican government as well. Unlike the DGRI, IME works directly through the Mexican consulates network, develops programmes to promote the rights of Mexicans abroad and works directly with the Mexican diaspora. The interviewee had more than 20-years' experience working with the Mexican community abroad and acknowledged that it was the first time hearing of this transborder population. The consulates in California had failed to identify such pupils and students so far. However, she instantly started contemplating the options of how to include them in the current protection programmes.

Furthermore, both interviews aided with data triangulation as they confirmed all governmental efforts in binational education are directed towards immigrants on either side of the border, but not to the population that crosses it permanently. However, the interviews showed a space of opportunity to develop a transborder education perspective that can benefit transborder learners. Both interviewees agreed on the feasibility of including transborder pupils and students in the cooperation agenda. This was a positive response. In addition, the conversations held with the policymakers helped to bring visibility to this population at a high level.

The third interview was conducted with scholar Iglesias Prieto. As stated previously, her work on transborderism is key to understanding the current phenomenon at the Mexico-U.S. border. During the interview at her office in San Diego State University campus, she confirmed having similar observations to the ones being discussed. Part of the discussion included the disconnection between transborder realities and the local policies in education. It was also stressed, the need to bridge the dialogue between academics and policymakers to reflect transborder realities and effectively address the challenges.

The original empirical data collected was an effort of ten months undertaken in six cities located in Mexico and the U.S. The local narratives of the participants show a transborder universe with a unique perspective and set of challenges. The later triangulation of information with stakeholders also reflects the twofold scope of the present thesis: i) to develop effective policies in education informed by empirical information and, ii) to bridge the dialogue between policymakers and academia. Overall, the whole endeavour required adaptability and innovative approaches. Furthermore, a combination of previous personal and professional knowledge of the worlds transited during fieldwork contributed to broader reflections of the Cali-Baja region and this research.

## **II. Conclusion**

The chapter presented the methodology considerations and methods used for data collection. The limitations experienced and my positionality as an insider-outsider were also discussed. Guided by the research questions, a total of thirty participants provided the information needed for the development of the second part of the research. Twenty-seven participants were former transborder pupils or students, or enrolled students in the Cali-Baja region. The empirical accounts refer to different periods of time ranging from the late 1950s to 2019. Such range contributes to the historicization of transborder practices reflecting the effects of state border policies. Three participants were part of stakeholder interviews and contributed to the triangulation of data and future policy development analysis. For a total of ten months of fieldwork, I travelled to Mexicali, Calexico, Tijuana, San Diego, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. This fieldwork was conducted in two separate visits to the region before 2020, when prolonged border closures were experienced due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The first field visit of three months at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 to Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego cities was essential to determine the best approach to the region. Additionally, this first visit aided to determine the elements to underscore in the design of the second field visit. The second field visit conducted from December 2018 to July 2019 contemplated experimental methods, including crossing the border with the participant. However, the challenges of researching a highly policed space limited the feasible methods for data collection. In this sense, it was decided to collect the data in person and via in-depth interviews in locations chosen by the participant on either side of the border. Data protection challenges were also analysed in an effort to show the level of complexity of the border regime. In 2018, U.S. CBP law enforcement authorised the search for information on international travellers' personal devices at border checkpoints. This meant that officers could have access to the voice recordings, notes and consent forms collected. For this reason, a specific data protection protocol was designed to protect the participants' narratives and identities, as these included encounters with U.S. CBP officers. The original empirical data collected, field observations, and the information from the stakeholder's interviews became paramount to assert critical aspects of the narratives that are determinant for the second part of the research.

Moreover, and in the border context, it was fundamental to further the discussion of vulnerability in relation to the participants and the researcher. To conduct fieldwork on the Mexico-U.S. border entails being subject to searches, inspections and possibly penalisations with personal and professional repercussions. When bodily researching the region, the researcher should be consciously aware of the risks of border crossings, the amount of time such a process would take, and the possibility of suffering harassment by law enforcers or other border crossers at checkpoints. Furthermore, the researcher's nationality and the type of immigration document held are an essential aspect for research designing as these limits the access to participants and field observations. The hardship and complexity of border practices are reflected in the mix of methods undertaken, the researcher's adaptive capacities, and challenges of data collecting. Such methodological endeavour is epistemologically relevant for transborder research that requires a constant transit between both sides of the border.

Furthermore, questions about the importance of the researcher's nationality are raised, in particular, regarding the development of experimental methods. Only binational researchers would be able to implement experimental methods in this region as they hold rights on both sides, reducing the possibilities of negative repercussions? It is paramount to continue discussing border research methods that overall contribute to the Mexico-U.S. border scholarship.

#### I. Introduction

I entered Vanessa's apartment in San Diego on a Saturday morning. She lived there during the weekdays and crossed the border to Tijuana during the weekends. She was packing her suitcase and said 'I am always conditioned to a suitcase' referring to the back and forth from San Diego and Tijuana. She lives in two places simultaneously. 'Laundry is cheaper in Tijuana' she said. Within a few minutes, we were on our way to Tijuana taking a small detour. Vanessa explained that commuting is one of the challenging aspects of being transborder. For this reason, she offers a ride to her peers when possible. Along the ride, Vanessa shared some family history and stories including why her nuclear family returned to Tijuana when living in a motorhome. She picked up her friend Sara who was going to Tijuana and started discussing topics related to a project. They were taking advantage of the commuting time. This short ride from San Diego to Tijuana revealed the reasons why she became transborder.

Transborder pupils and students visit four loci during the transborder practice: 'At Home', the 'Port of Entry (PoE)', 'At School', and finally, 'Back to the Family Home'. In these four spaces transborderism is decided and enacted. This chapter will address the first location, home, as the place where everything started. The objective is to analyse the parents' reasons for turning their children transborder. The analysis, however, was conducted via the accounts of the participants.

First, an historical account of the American dream is provided, including the changing of its meaning throughout time. This account helps with the understanding of the benefits promised by the dream inherited from parents to children. Education plays a vital role in the realisation of the dream as is perceived to be an equalizer of conditions in U.S. society. On this common ground, three different main categories for becoming transborder are proposed and developed.

The first one refers to transborderism as a way to have access to the U.S. and the American dream. Although U.S. and American dream are not interchangeable terms; these are intrinsically connected in the particular case of transborderism. In this sense, transborderism is planned and optional for the family. It is understood as a family strategy to provide better life opportunities for the children. Based on the stories of the participants, the families had different strategies. For example, some participants were born in the U.S. with the family intending to remain in Mexico. Other participants explained the importance of speaking fluent English to access better job opportunities transnationally.

In contrast, transborderism to partly remain in the U.S. is a forced process catalysed by sudden relocation to the Mexican side of the border. Such is the case for those transborderers that have one or two parents deported from the U.S. to Mexico. However, the data collected showed that the U.S. economic crisis in 2007 and 2008 forced families to relocate to Tijuana. The affected participants became transborder as a way to partly remain in the U.S. Lastly, the third category refers to

intergenerational transborderism as part of family tradition and identity. Such characteristic was observed in border families that have been residing in the Cali-Baja region for a number of generations.

The analysis of the proposed categorisation contributes to the understanding of the process by exploring the reasons for becoming transborder at a formative stage. Traditional approaches to border commuters in this region focus on workers driven by higher paid jobs in the U.S. However, transborderism and its practice is more complex when looked at through the accounts of pupils and students. In this sense, the parent's inherited motivations behind the practice and the local reconfiguration of the American dream are essential to the analysis.

## **II. Becoming Transborder**

Transborder population is a heterogenic group with different conditions and reasons for crossing the Cali-Baja border. The practice of transborderism does show, however, certain process similarities among border commuters. For instance, this population has to endure the hardship of transiting the lands Port of Entry regardless of the reasons for crossing it. Transborder pupils and students additionally share the academic motivation for crossing the border constantly. Nevertheless, the reasons for partaking in a transborder dynamic vary. In the case of the Cali-Baja region and particularly with regards to the participants of this research, the reasons for becoming transborder can be placed mainly in three categories.

The first category presents transborderism as a family project to figuratively provide entrance to the U.S. via nationality or a student visa. The second category shows transborderism as a mechanism to partly remain in the U.S. after sudden international relocation. In the third category transborderism is understood as a family intergenerational element of identity in this region. However, it is essential to underscore two things observed in all categories. The first refers to the relevance of education in all three categories as a condition to meet the desire objectives. The second refers to the underlying influence of the precarious Mexican social, political, and economic environment on becoming transborder. To pursue the benefits of the American dream, through transborderism or other mechanisms, entails a deteriorated Mexican reality. Nevertheless, the economic asymmetry of the border also represents an opportunity for better living conditions on the Mexican side when holding a job in the U.S. Such duality of the Mexican reality is experienced and understood differently by border population influencing the motivations behind transborder practices and education.

### **II.I The Nonlinear American Dream**

Since the establishment of the Mexico-U.S. border, various dynamics developed as a reaction to the geopolitical demarcation. Border residents started to make sense of a new livelihood that included different laws, languages, and symbols. Such residents also foresaw the opportunities that these



differences represented for personal and regional purposes. As established in a previous chapter, the industrial development of the U.S. during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Gold Rush, triggered economic asymmetry and opportunities.

Railroad and construction industries attracted immigrants to the U.S. mostly from Asia and Mexico. The demand for labour force was such that it marked the onset of constant immigration flows to the U.S. The paradigm of the latest interpretation of the American dream reached the acquired territories of California. The American dream attracted thousands of Mexicans confident in becoming economically successful regardless of their born conditions.

The first decade of the 1900s in Mexico was characterised by social unrest that eventually led to the onset of the Mexican Revolution. The social, political, and economic spheres were drastically reformed. At the same time, Mexican population suffered the struggles of economic and political instability that facilitated emigration to the north. After the culmination of the Mexican Revolution in 1924, the Mexican economy started to be reconstructed based on economic emancipation from the previous political system (Womack, J., 2012). However, the precarity lived on in the first decades of the 1900, triggered the pursuit of the American dream, and became institutionalised in the Mexican imaginary. Nevertheless, dreams are nonlinear and elements interplay. The American dream in the Mexico-U.S. border context is no exception.

During the 1900s, the American dream was transformed and began entangling economic and social elements into its meaning. 'Beware, resentful multimillionaires, for they will destroy the American dream' (Churchwell, S., 2018:27) was the main message in an article by the New York Post in 1900. The idea of multimillionaires, wealth accumulation, and property ownership, juxtaposed directly to the essential democratic equality of the American dream. During the Progressive Era (1890–1920), there were several American dreams as its meaning was not anchored to economic progress and opportunities. Newspapers printed articles and stories about these, such as: the 'American dream of naval supremacy' (1877), the 'American dream of a republic of Cuba appeared to be over' (1906), 'Mexico in American hands is the American dream' (1916). Such titles exemplified the various usages of the term referring to specific situations and not to its contemporary economic understanding (Churchwell, S. 2018).

It is during such times that 'the' American dream was shaped. The dream of equal opportunity and democracy was understood through individual success. The notion of wealth accumulation being un-American vanished. In 1931, James Truslow Adams published his book *The Epic of America* using the American dream term. As an historian, he was concerned with the history of the Americas and the systematisation of colonial influences. The book was a reaction to the Great Depression, and James T. Adams was hopeful for the U.S. society to overcome the crisis:

'But there has been also the American dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement...It is not the dream of motor cars and highways merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which

they are innately capable, and be recognised by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position...If we are to make the dream come true we must all work together, no longer to build bigger, but to build better' (Adams, J., 1931:401).

James T. Adams hoped to remind the readers of the American dream as a social construct of the sum of the efforts within such society, working together for their betterment. Such a utopic society would be women and men capable of breaking free from birth circumstances with the opportunity to develop fully. In other words, the American dream represents the opportunity of upward social and economic mobility.

From the Progressive Era and the writings of J. Adams to the present day, the utopic essence of the American dream changed. Wealth accumulation and a certain lifestyle became the goal. Hollywood industry, fashion, the rise of magazines and editorials with pictures, provided a snapshot of the lifestyle of the 1% (Churchwell, S., 2018). The general population and readers were exposed to material success becoming aspirational. Such circumstances, along with the fast-paced industry development, a new conception of modernity evoked a societal configuration different from the 'dated' political ideas and arrangements. To break free from poverty and birth systemic conditions became the dream. This dream is still being pursued by Hispanic the community in the U.S.

Surveys conducted with members of the Hispanic diaspora in the U.S. by the Pew Research Center in 2016 and 2017, presented the contemporary understanding of the American dream which included milestones such as homeownership, graduating from college, and general improvement of livelihood conditions (Pew Research Center, 2018). The survey conducted in 2017 showed a small educational difference in the responses. For example, 87% of the people with four-year college education expressed that freedom of choice in their livelihood is essential for the American dream. In contrast, 15% of those with just a high school diploma said that becoming wealthy is essential for achieving the dream (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, the American dream has not been materialised for everyone since 51% of Hispanics expressed feeling on track to achieve the dream whilst 76% believe it is a hard thing to do. For 26% of this demographic population, upward social mobility through a well-paid profession is an essential element of the Dream. This mobility is achieved through hard work and financial stability as expressed by 25% of this population. Approximately 14% of those who felt they were not yet achieving the American dream said they would through education. A total of 75% of U.S.-born Hispanics with immigrant parents believe their standard of living is already better than the one of their parents. Lastly, one-third of Latinos that felt they had achieved the American dream said that migrating to the U.S. was defining (Pew Research Center, 2018). These statistics show the contemporary elements considered to be symbolic of the American dream by the Hispanic diaspora including the role of education in the process.

Based on the work by Michael Hout (1988) social mobility can be mediated by the role of education. It does so by impacting the social destination of the learners which could be different from their social origins. The level of education attained will be decisive in the social destination although it would vary depending on gender and race. Such a conclusion is shared by Torche (2011) in her paper 'Is a College Degree Still the Great Equaliser? Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of

Schooling in the United States'. In this paper, Torche provided empirical evidence showing the influence of attaining higher education on intergenerational class mobility. Gender and social class of origin are two important elements considered in the analysis that might slow down the process of upward social mobility. For instance, The Hispanic Wealth Project report published in 2020 showed that Latinos in the U.S. with a Bachelor's degree have forty-eight times the net worth than those holding just a high school diploma. This represents an increment of 70% from 2001 (Hispanic Wealth Project, 2020). In the inherited pursuit of the American dream, education is still considered to be a social and economic equaliser in the context of the Mexico-U.S. border.

To have a transborder life or one with frequent border crossings, provides a glimpse of the American lifestyle and conditions that are automatically compared with those experienced on the Mexican side. It is important to underscore that such a comparison is done in a place of privilege where legal mobility between both countries is granted, either by birth or financial solvency. Furthermore, such experiences of different realities can influence the outlook on the advantages or disadvantages of the American dream and the Mexican reality. However, such contact with the U.S. lifestyle from abroad is also possible through various transnational practices albeit at different scales.

For instance, transnational companies take advantage of economic, financial, and other political conditions that benefit almost exclusively the company's revenue. People with a particular skillset experience this alternative version of the American dream from abroad. Such is the case of virtual migrants hired in different countries to provide services for U.S. companies and customers. An example would be the call centres located mostly in the Global South. Virtual migrants experience U.S. work style and potentially higher paid jobs in comparison to the local wage levels (Aneesh, A., 2006). In such case, the role of the English language is essential to access specific spaces considered economically beneficial. This is mirrored in transborderism where English language is a channel and a motivation for the practice. The role of the English language will be further analysed in the following chapter.

It is in this sense that the presented account of the American dream showed how its contemporary understanding is influenced by certain milestones in relation to economic and social conditions. Moreover, transnational practices provide alternative processes in which elements of the dream could be experienced depending on the adaptive capacities and skillset of the virtual immigrants. In this context, transborderism is also a path for the realisation of the dream as stated in the narratives of transborder pupils or students. The importance of the American dream is established and inherited by parents as a life goal. Furthermore, the data collected shows the importance of education on becoming transborder, to partly remain in the U.S., and as a family intergenerational identity. The following categorisation of the reasons for becoming transborder are in a figurative sense. For instance, all transborder population possess a lawful document to enter the U.S. and remain in such territory indefinitely, or for a period of time in case of holding a visa. However, the first categorisation refers to having access or remaining in the U.S. in relation to elements of the American dream such as better job opportunities and a safer environment.

### III. Transborderism to Access the U.S.

To become transborder or to make someone a transborder subject, necessarily requires the developing of strategies and assessing the cost-benefits of such endeavour. For example, the way the border would be crossed, the amount of time and money required to get to school or a place of work, the psychological impact of the long commute, access to health, and to develop protocols in case of emergencies. The conception and implementation of such strategies are already indicative of the existence of a transborder life condition and perspective.

Strategy and planning lie at the core of this category of reasons for becoming transborder. More importantly, it is optional. It does not refer exclusively to people commuting daily with a visa but also includes U.S. citizens. Transborderism to have access is usually more gradual as it requires time for making the decision that will impact the entire family. In the case of the former pupils and students interviewed for this research in the Cali-Baja region, 100% of those with an F1 visa fall under this type. It also means that such participants grew up in a certain economic level as the parents would need to be financially solvent to request the F1 visa for the pupil. Binational transborder learners attending private schools in the U.S. are also part of this category without necessarily having the same level of solvency, as their families would not need to provide proof of income required by the visa process. However, they would need to pay school fees. In both cases, the transborder life of the pupil was planned by the parents at an early point of their life or academic path. For example, to be born in the U.S. was the family plan for those binational participants. In comparison, those who hold an F1 visa could have attended primary school in Mexico for a short period of time previously. The latter characteristic is also shared by former transborder students that began such practice at a later stage. However, and in all cases, the participants were living on the Mexican side of the border at the time of becoming transborder.

Transborderism to have access to the U.S. and the American dream, has the objective of providing the possibility of achieving better living conditions for the learners. This objective is based on the role of education in upward mobility and the development of skillsets required in the U.S. labour market. In the words of Iglesias Prieto (2019) transborderism when optional 'Is to have the professional and cultural ability to access the labour market. It is a wild card that parents give to their children in case they decide to access the U.S. labour market' (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2019, personal interview, 12 June). Such understanding was present in the narratives of the former transborder pupils and students participating in this research. When asked if their parents lived or ever wanted to live in the U.S., with only a few exceptions, the resounding answer was 'yes'. Either they would have wanted to, or they did live in the U.S. but returned to Mexico. A group of participants was not sure if the parents pursued the American dream fully. However, the importance of speaking English fluently for economic success was always present in the narrative of the parents. To live at the border in these cases represented the opportunity to provide the children with the chance to pursue the American dream or at least, benefit them with fluent English.

The following narratives show the way transborderism was planned by the family as a strategy

to gain access to the U.S. and better living conditions via economic success. The experiences of the participants under this type of planned transborderism are divided into two. The first one presents the stories of binational participants, and the second the narratives belonging to former F1 visa holders. It is very important to underscore that the families were residing in Mexico when planning the transborderism of this group of participants. This characteristic is important to remember as those participants that became transborder to partly remain in the U.S. are also binational. In such cases, to become transborder was an adaptive mechanism to sudden international relocation to Mexico. Furthermore, subcategorisations are also relevant to fully grasp the reasons for becoming transborder.

### III.I Access the U.S. through Nationality

This section presents the importance of the nationality in the participant's transborder identity and practice. To be born in the U.S. was considered an essential aspect to increase the possibilities of future better life conditions of this group. Such is the case of **Jimena** and **Dominique** who attended private schools in the U.S. Jimena went to school in Calexico whilst living in Mexicali. Dominique studied in San Diego whilst living in Tijuana.

#### **Jimena:**

Mis papás me dijeron 'la verdad como no tenemos mucho que dejarte cuando fallezcamos o algo, pero lo que sí te queremos dejar es por lo menos la nacionalidad americana porque viene con muchos beneficios y muchas oportunidades y más estando en la vida fronteriza que si estudias acá (EE.UU.) y en México. Ellos creían que acá (EE.UU.) era más fácil ganarse la vida. En ese entonces mis papás empezaron a desarrollar su vida acá (EE.UU.) pero en las sombras y con los problemas cruzando...ya sabes, 'voy de compras' pero ibas a trabajar.

(My parents told me 'the truth is that we do not have much to leave you when we die or something but what we want to leave you with at least is the American nationality, because it comes with many benefits and many opportunities especially when being at the border, even more if you study here (U.S.) and in Mexico. They believed that in here (U.S.) it was easier to make a living. At that time my parents began to develop a life here (U.S.) but in the shadows and with the problems when crossing ... you know, 'I'm going shopping' but they were going to work.)

**Dominique:**

Querían darnos (sus padres) más oportunidad a mí y a mis hermanos, más oportunidades como ciudadanos americanos y sí era más por las oportunidades que los mexicanos a lo mejor las tienen, pero no aquí en Estados Unidos.

(They [her parents] wanted to give me and my siblings more opportunities as an American citizen and indeed it was for the opportunities that Mexicans might be able to have, not in here (Mexico), but in the U.S.)

Jimena's and Dominique's narratives reflect the importance of holding U.S. nationality, as explained to them by their parents. Although these participants did not specifically mention economic success, it can be observed in the narratives when referring to the asymmetries between Mexico and the U.S. In the case of Jimena, the relevance of her U.S. nationality is related to 'the border life'. Both narratives resounded with **Alejandra** who attended a private school in the U.S. Since Alejandra lived and conducted her academic path mostly in Tijuana, she questions the benefits of being a U.S. national. This argument is directly related to the expected upward social mobility through education in the U.S.:

Mi papá es de Tijuana y mi mamá de San Diego. Yo nací en San Diego por los beneficios de ser americana, pero no sé cuáles. Siempre he vivido en Tijuana y ahí estudié hasta que me pasé a la prepa en San Diego porque quería entrar a una buena universidad en Estados Unidos, pero terminé estudiando mi carrera en México.

(My dad is from Tijuana and my mom from San Diego. I was born in San Diego for the benefits of being an American, but I don't know what these are. I have always lived in Tijuana and studied there until I went to high school in San Diego, because I wanted to go to university in the U.S., but I ended up studying my bachelor degree in Mexico.)

In some cases, the family project to have children in the U.S. while living in Mexico can take many years of planning depending on economic possibilities. Such is the case of **Mariana** who was born in Torrance, California but resided in Mexicali and attended a private school in Calexico. Her mother, father, and older sister got on a bus and went to Torrance with almost no money in their pockets. Mariana's older sister was born in Mexico because her parents could not afford the hospital fee in the U.S. and bought a house instead. This decision shows the amount of economic effort and planning it required for Mariana to be born in the U.S. Furthermore, and while in Torrance, her sister almost failed the school year in Mexico since she was absent until Mariana was born. Her mother signed a waiver identifying herself as a low-income person to reduce the hospital fee. When asked the reasons for her family's decision to have her born in the U.S., Mariana replied:

Para mi mamá siempre ha sido el sueño americano, de venir y vivir aquí (EE.UU.). Ella siempre quiso vivir aquí y tener su vida aquí pero nunca pasó. Tengo dos tíos que son ciudadanos americanos, pero nunca le arreglaron los papeles ni a mi mamá ni a mis otros tíos, entonces cuando cumplí veintiún años le arreglé los papeles a mi mamá y ya es residente.

(For my mom it has always been the American dream, to come and live here (U.S.). She always wanted to live and conduct her life here, but it never happened. I have two uncles that are American citizens, but they never requested citizenship papers for my mom nor my other uncles, so when I turned twenty-one I requested the American citizenship for my mom and now she is an American resident.)

Mariana's story reflects straightforwardly her mother's aspiration to live the American dream that entailed better opportunities. Her parents planned to have her born in the U.S. and make her transborder. She always studied in the U.S. including university. Mariana also shared that her mother felt that it was pointless to be a U.S. citizen and live on the Mexican side for the rest of her life. For this reason, she was always exhorted to settle permanently in the U.S. after university. In Mariana's case, it is clearly observed the way her transborderism was planned and fostered throughout her life. Her mother is finally a U.S. resident after twenty-one years. Mariana currently lives and works in the U.S. as planned by her mother.

In some cases, the reasons for parents having children born in the U.S. are related to the socio-political environment in Mexico. Particularly during the past two decades, the asymmetries between Mexico and the U.S. have broadened negatively, including rising levels of violence in Mexico (UNODC, 2018). The emergence and expansion of drug cartels have been an important element for internal or international mobility. The parents of **Josemar** were worried about his safety and future in Mexico:

Nací en Estados Unidos porque mi papá y mi mamá no querían que estudiara en México. Querían que estudiara en Estados Unidos porque no querían que viviera en México, mi familia viene de Sinaloa y está bien loco por allá.

(I was born in the U.S. because my father and mother did not want me to study in Mexico. They wanted me to study in U.S. because they did not want me to live in Mexico. My family comes from Sinaloa and it is crazy around there.)

Sinaloa is one of the Mexican states where drug cartels first initiated to operate. It is not surprising that Josemar's parents wanted to relocate to a safer community and went to Tijuana thinking about

the opportunities the border holds. To make Josemar transborder was a strategy to provide him a safer environment than the U.S. represents in comparison to Mexico.

The narratives presented and discussed show the different reasons parents turned their children transborder via U.S. nationality. To have children born in the U.S. was the strategy used based on the notion that better living conditions can be achieved more easily with dual citizenship, coupled with receiving U.S. education. In the participants' narratives, to be born in the U.S. was almost a guarantee for better life opportunities. However, it was through education that such opportunities could be materialised since it is still perceived as a social equalizer in the U.S. For this reason, the participants were turned into transborder subjects at a formative stage to develop the skillset needed to access U.S. labour market and lifestyle. Moreover, the role of education in accessing better life opportunities is clearly observed on all the experiences regardless of attending private or public schools, since just holding dual nationality was not sufficient to achieve the family objectives.

Moreover, and as discussed, to have children born in the U.S. can be a substantial economic effort for most Mexican families. For this reason, not all families begin planning their children's transborderism at such an early stage. The following section presents the reasons for becoming transborder conditioned by a student visa.

### III.II Access to the U.S. through a Student Visa

The original data collected for this research shows that 100% of the participants with only Mexican citizenship were sent to U.S. schools to improve the English language skills. As the following narratives show, English proficiency is perceived as an essential element for better opportunities and thus, a better future livelihood on either side of the border. The following experiences share such a notion of English language proficiency representing opportunities for a better life. To achieve the desired language level, these participants were sent to U.S. schools. **Edna, Anely, Selene, Marisa,** and **Arantxa** explained the reasons for becoming transborder and the hardship of such process. They all transitioned from the Mexican education system to the U.S. with a student visa.

#### **Edna:**

Me cambiaron (de escuela) porque iba fatal yo en inglés, iba a reprobado 4to año porque no te sabía decir ni *coffee and donuts*. Entonces la maestra le exigió (a sus padres) que me metieran a un curso de inglés. Me metieron a un curso de inglés en la tarde en una escuela aquí en Mexicali. Esa maestra le sugirió a mi mamá que lo mejor era que yo me fuera a una escuela a Calexico a estudiar si es que quería aprender, porque tenía yo como ocho o nueve años entonces fue 'si no lo aprende ahora señora ya no lo va a aprender' ...el inglés te da mejores oportunidades.



(They changed me (of school) because my English was awful, I was going to fail fourth year because I didn't even know how to say coffee and donuts. So, the teacher demanded that I took an extra English course. They (my parents) put me in an afternoon English course at a school here in Mexicali. That same teacher suggested to my mother that the best thing for me was to go to school in Calexico to study English if I ever wanted to learn it, because I was eight or nine years old then so, it came to a point where [the teacher said] 'if she doesn't learn it now, she never will' ... English gives you better opportunities.)

**Anely:**

Me cambiaron a los catorce años a Calexico Mission School porque mi mamá veía como una ventaja el idioma inglés y quería que lo aprendiera de primera mano, prácticamente eso, porque nos iba a dar una ventaja a mí y a mi hermana.

(I was sent to Calexico Mission School at age fourteen because my mom saw the English language as an advantage and wanted me to learn it first-hand, practically that, because it would give us an advantage for me and my sister.)

**Selene:**

Una tía mía les arregló a todos sus hermanos, y mi papá quería que tuviéramos esa oportunidad para aprender inglés...para abrir esa puerta y esa oportunidad y 'si en un futuro quieren hacer una vida allá (EE.UU.)', tener esa puerta.

(An aunt of mine arranged the immigration documentation for her siblings, and my dad wanted us to have that opportunity to learn English... to open that door and that opportunity, 'if in the future you want to have a life there (U.S.) [her father said], you have that door'.)

**Marisa:**

Mis papás me enviaron a cursar la primaria a la Olga porque querían que aprendiera inglés. Ellos vieron como aquí en Mexicali te abre muchas puertas y te da muchas oportunidades de trabajo, entonces 'queremos que nuestras hijas tengan una buena educación y un buen inglés para que no batallen' (dijeron sus padres), porque mis papás no saben inglés, ellos no querían que estuviéramos batallando con eso entonces nos mandaron a estudiar allá (EE.UU.).

(My parents sent me to primary school at Olga because they wanted me to learn English. They saw that here in Mexicali it opens many doors and gives you many job opportunities, so 'we want our daughters to have a good education and good level of English so they don't struggle' [her parents said], because my parents don't speak English, they didn't want us to be struggling with that, then they sent us to study there (U.S.).)

The previous narratives underscored the importance of speaking English proficiently as the main reason to have attended U.S. schools. English is perceived as professional and have academic leverage in this globalised and transnational world. Moreover, an additional aspect mentioned by the participants was related to the accent when speaking English. To have a native accent that can be learnt by full U.S. immersion through U.S. schools, is the additional asset when seeking better opportunities. Such a statement is racially charged and reflects the historical discrimination Mexicans have suffered in the U.S. Moreover, the border asymmetry is entailed in this statement. To speak with a native accent is as important as to speak it fluently, as expressed by **Arantxa**:

Mi mamá, su punto focal era para afilar el inglés porque ella siempre ha trabajado en maquiladoras entonces ella está consiente que hablar el inglés de una manera fluida y abierta, y ser bueno en el inglés realmente, sí te abría una puerta más, una extra, mínimo si tu traes un currículo en inglés comparado con uno en español es evidencia de que sí sabes, siempre era su manera 'te va a ayudar, te va ayudar' siempre nos decía. Era su visión que yo me afilara con el inglés y la lengua, y hablarlo, porque tú puedes aprender lectura y saber leerlo y escribirlo, pero más que nada hablarlo así fluido es lo que batalla la mayoría. Era lo que a ella le preocupaba, ella entrevistaba gente y decía que luego luego se nota cuando alguien aprendió aquí (México) o allá (EE.UU.).

(My mom's focal point was for me to improve my English because she has always worked in *maquiladoras* so she knew that to speak in English fluently and be really good at it, does opens doors, an extra one, if you bring your curriculum in English instead of one in Spanish, is evidence that you do know, 'it will help you, it will help you' she always said. Her vision was for me to improve my English and the language, and to speak it, because you can learn how to read it and write it, but most importantly to speak it fluently is what most people struggle with. It was the thing she was concerned with, she used to interview people and say 'you can tell right away when someone learnt English in here (Mexico) or in there (U.S.).')

The role of English language as an essential element for success is important in the analysis for becoming transborder. Although the concept of the American dream was not specifically mentioned by these participants, English language proficiency is perceived as a condition for better life opportunities. Furthermore, a connection between the transborder practice and transnational opportunities is observed particularly when including job opportunities on the Mexican side linked to U.S. industries. In this sense, U.S. education was the channel to develop the skillset needed to enter the U.S. labour market or other fields with international scope. Furthermore, to attend U.S. schools, pupils and students would also understand U.S. culture and societal behaviour that could contribute in granting access to certain job positions. Further analysis of the role of English language in transborderism is accounted in a following chapter. For the time being, the narratives mentioned above allowed me to determine the connection of learning English language in a U.S. school with

the reasons for becoming transborder subjects, as planned by the parents.

Planned transborderism to access the American dream stems from heterogenic circumstances and conditions. To receive U.S education in English is perceived as determinant for better future life opportunities as observed in the narratives of these former transborder learners. Under this category for becoming transborder, such a life process can be optional and considered a family strategy. In some cases, it took years before the parents could finally grant either a U.S. passport or a student visa to their children, marking the onset of the transborder life. However, not all the families of transborder students or pupils had the opportunity to plan such practice. To partly remain in the U.S. is also a family strategy when sudden or forced relocation to Mexico occurs. Such relocation can be due to economic hardship in the U.S. or to immigration processes such as deportation. This is referred to as forced transborderism (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2019). This is a mechanism adopted to partly remain in the U.S. economic, social, and cultural dynamic. In the specific case of being relocated to the Mexican side of the border, to become transborder granted the opportunity to continue in the U.S. education system. Even when having the option to enrol in a Mexican school, the family strategy was to figuratively and economically remain in the U.S. The following section presents the narratives of those participants under such condition.

#### **IV. Transborderism to Remain in the U.S.**

As nonlinear, the American dream is affected by many variables that could interrupt it in various aggressive ways, immigration or financial struggles being the most common. To become transborder as a way to partly remain in the U.S. is characterised by the forced, circumstantial, and almost immediate relocation from the U.S. to Mexico. These families had permanent residency in the U.S. but relocate to Mexican border cities. This allowed them to keep having access to U.S. services or employment. This is the case of multi-status families with a record of deportation of one or both parents. In the case of this research, a group of participants relocated to Tijuana due to U.S. economic hardship experienced by the family. However, they kept attending school in the U.S. side initiating a transborder life.

The following life stories from **Vannessa** and **Jesús** show the way transborderism and its practice became a reaction to the family economic circumstances. In both cases significant ties and connections to Mexico already existed. This transnationalism allowed them to relocate legally on the Mexican side. Furthermore, Vannessa and Jesús were born in the U.S. which made transborderism and its practice a feasible family strategy. It would have been almost impossible to request a student visa due to the economic hardship suffered by the families that forced them to leave the U.S.

**Vannessa** is a current transborder scholar that was born in Los Angeles, California. She has been a transnational subject for her entire life. Her father was born in Peru and migrated to the U.S. as a young adult. Her mother is Mexican from Tijuana. The family would usually travel to Tijuana to visit relatives and enjoy Mexican gastronomy. By 1994, they were living in a motor home struggling economically. The family decided to move to Tijuana where life is cheaper than in the U.S. They crossed the motor home to Tijuana, and the entire family started a transborder life. Her father would cross the border to work, her mother to law school, and Vannessa and her brother to attend school. She shared with me her family story on becoming transborder:

Fue una razón muy *romanticized* porque mi papá quería vivir una *transborder and transnational life* porque le gustó México. Él es peruano, pero de *background*, mi mamá es mexicana, pero a ella le gusta más la cultura americana, de hecho, *she speaks better English and Spanish than I do. My mom is what you can consider a 1.5 and technically 1.5 my dad too.* Osea que vinieron a Estados Unidos *at a very young age, at eighteen years old basically, so they were basically settled* pero cuando mi papá conoció a mi mamá, le gustó mucho Tijuana. *I did like a whole upside down flip... initially kindergarten in U.S., luego... poverty for sure. I was in TJ (Tijuana).* Luego las cosas mejoraron y nos fuimos a Los Ángeles otra vez y ahí empecé mi primaria y todo eso. Cuando empecé lo de transfronteriza fue a los doce años. Lo que pasó es que nuestras vidas estaban establecidas aquí, pero nos fuimos a Tijuana literalmente con un tráiler *purchased in L.A.,* ahora sí que un *transborder home.* Cruzaba la frontera and *that was one of the hardest... my initial transition to my transborder life was one of the hardest introductions not to just transborder living but to life... that's my foundation.* Si hoy día que tengo treinta y dos años, *I reflect back and if I'm thinking, damn this is hard, I haven't slept or skipped the night, I've been through worst. My schedule as a child was very rigorous* era de nos levantábamos a las cuatro de la mañana *for school. My parents were still working in the U.S., we technically lived on both sides but aquí (U.S.) was like homelessness you know sleep in the car, you start at four and wait until class start, my mom went to law school and wait until my mom comes out and a veces salía tarde, 9:45-10 pm. Llegar a casa muy tarde and do it over again the next day.* Y yo pensaba, *this is forever* y sí lo fue por muchos años. *There is an adaptability to it.*

(It was a very romanticised reason because my dad wanted to live a transborder and transnational life because he liked Mexico. He is Peruvian as a background, my mother is Mexican but she likes American culture more, in fact she speaks better English and Spanish than I do. My mom is what you can consider a 1.5 and technically my dad is a 1.5 too. I mean they came to the United States at a very young age, at eighteen years old basically, so they were basically settled but when my dad met my mom, he liked Tijuana a lot. I did like a whole upside-down flip...initially kindergarten in U.S., then ... poverty for sure. I was in TJ (Tijuana).

Then things got better and we went to Los Angeles again and there I started my elementary school and all that. I started to be transborder at twelve years old. What happened is that our lives were established here (U.S.) but we literally went to Tijuana with a trailer purchased in L.A., a transborder home. Crossing the border was one of the hardest... my initial transition to my transborder life was one of the hardest introductions not to just transborder living but to life... that's my foundation. If today at thirty-two years old, I reflect back and I'm thinking damn this is hard I haven't slept or skipped a night, I've been through worse. My schedule as a child was very rigorous, we woke up at four in the morning for school. My parents were still working in the U.S., we technically lived on both sides but here (U.S.) was like homelessness, you know sleep in the car, you start at four and wait until class start, my mom went to law school and waited until my mom came out and sometimes it would be late, 9: 45-10 pm, got home super late and do it over again the next day. And I thought, this is forever and yes it was for many years. There is an adaptability to it.)

In the particular case of Vanessa, the entire family was able to cross the border and conduct economic and academic activities on both sides. This endeavour demanded huge sacrifices from all of the members. Vanessa's transborder experience was highly formative and considered as a foundational element of her identity and outlook on life. She showed resilience and endurance during years of economic hardship. Moreover, her narrative shows the type of vulnerabilities that members of this demographic group face sometimes. Furthermore, the sense of homelessness mentioned contributes to further the understanding of the practice of transborderism and its connection to the wellbeing of the subjects. It is important to highlight that in other cases, only one of the participant's parents were able to lawfully enter the U.S. as some of those families experienced a process of deportation.

As stated previously, under this category for becoming transborder the family had to rapidly adapt to new geopolitical circumstances even if already residing on the border region. Such is the case of **Jesús** that became transborder as a teenager. Regardless of his ties to Tijuana and his Mexican family, to become transborder was unexpected. Sitting in a Carl's Jr. in Tijuana, he explained that both of his parents were born in Mexico City but moved to San Diego looking for better employment, which they eventually found. This idea of migrating to California stemmed from his grandfather who was already living in San Diego. He encouraged them to move to the U.S. Jesús continued:

Yo nací en San Diego, esa era mi ciudad y nunca me imaginé que terminaría viviendo en Tijuana. En la crisis financiera del 2008, perdimos nuestra casa y mis papás decidieron mudarnos a Tijuana. Yo tenía dieciséis años. Entonces empecé a cruzar la frontera a diario. Una tía nos prestaba el comprobante de domicilio que necesitaba para la escuela a cambio de ayudarlo a pagar un *bill*.

(I was born in San Diego, that is my hometown and I never imagined I would end up living in Tijuana. During the financial crisis of 2008, we lost the house and my parents decided to move to Tijuana. I was sixteen years old. Then I started to cross the border daily. An aunt lent us the proof of address needed in school in exchange of paying one house bill.)

Although Jesús was already a border resident, to become transborder was not a plan until the family circumstances made him cross the border daily. To be familiar with the urban landscape and the city made the process less difficult for him, but it was certainly not easy. His account also presents one of the mechanisms to have access to U.S. public education. Today, he still lives in Tijuana travelling to San Diego daily and champions the recognition of transborder students inside U.S. academic institutions.

The life stories of Vanessa and Jesús showed unfortunate economic circumstances that catalysed their transborder lifestyle after suddenly relocating to Tijuana. The story of Vanessa provided a glimpse into the hardship she has experienced as a transborder learner. The emotional and systemic struggles endured as a transborder pupil reflect the level of sacrifices such practice demands for some. In the case of Jesús, the impact of sudden relocation to Tijuana and difficulties of a transborder life are observed even when he was already a resident of San Diego. Both Vanessa and Jesús are now active advocates for transborder students to be recognised in local academic institutions.

## V. Transborderism as an Intergenerational Family Identity

A third category of planned transborderism refers to intergenerational transborderism (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2019, personal interview, 12 June). In this case, transborderism is a family identity element. Such is the case of **Kora** whose family has been residing in Mexicali and Calexico since the first decades of the 1900s, and partaking in transborder dynamics since then.

**Kora** explained:

Mi madre nació en Hermosillo en 1912 y ya para 1915 radicaban en Mexicali, pero no había casas que ellos pudieran rentar para radicar entonces llegaron a Calexico. Mi mamá vivió y estudió en Calexico. Muchas de las amistades de mi mamá radicaban en Calexico. Era como una misma ciudad, el ir y venir, no era extraño ir a una escuela en Mexicali o a una en Calexico, era casi igual. La hermana pequeña de mi madre le tocó ser la primera generación de *Our Lady* y fue ella a esa escuela. El hecho de que las demás sobrinas, incluyendo a mi hermana fueran a esa escuela no era extraño. Posteriormente, yo también. Era natural. Yo nací en Mexicali... me fui a la escuela privada católica de Calexico *Our Lady Guadalupe* donde habían estado mi hermana y mis tías. Mis hijas y mis nietos también entraron a la escuela en Estados Unidos, aunque mis nietos ya no cruzan tan seguido. Yo siento que se les da una oportunidad

más, y así fue, pero hay algo más que el idioma, aprenden a convivir con otra cultura en muchos sentidos.

(My mother was born in Hermosillo (Mexico) in 1912 and by 1915 they (her family) were already living in Mexicali, but there were no houses that they could rent, so they went to Calexico. My mother lived and studied in Calexico. Many of my mother's friends lived in Calexico. It was like the same city, coming and going, it was not strange to go to a school in Mexicali or to one in Calexico, it was almost the same. My mother's little sister happened to be the first generation of Our Lady and she went to that school. The fact that the other nieces, including my sister, attended that same school, it was not strange. Later on I did too. It was natural. I was born in Mexicali... I went to Calexico Our Lady Guadalupe private Catholic school where my sister and my aunts had gone. My daughters and my grandchildren also went to school in the United States, although my grandchildren do not cross (the border) as often. I believe that you are providing them a further opportunity, as it has been, but there is something more than the language, they learn to live with another culture in many ways.)

Kora's narrative shows at least four generations of transborder pupils and students in her family at the Mexicali-Calexico border. Mexicali was officially founded in 1903 (Gobierno de Mexicali, 2020) and Calexico in 1908 (USGS, 1981). Kora's family history belongs to one of the first generations of transborder people in this border region. Her experience allows for several observations: i) transborderism has existed in this border since at least the official establishment of the twin cities contributing to its historicization, ii) transborderism can also be a normative element of a family identity, iii) transborderism is profoundly shaped and affected by the border crossing difficulties.

Kora's family story is important for the understanding of transborderism in Mexicali and Calexico. It reflects its changing dynamic and the way its practice is influenced by border and immigration policies. Moreover, to be transborder as a family trait it was also observed in the narratives of other participants being able to trace it back to two generations. Although it was a planned family strategy via U.S. nationality or a student visa, in this particular category an additional intergenerational element was observed. To become transborder was more related to the family history and traditional way of life than to the wish to migrate to the U.S. permanently. Furthermore, the role of education was essential for such intergenerational family trait as well.

The empirical data analysed in this chapter provided the answer to the first question guiding this research. It could be observed the different reasons the parents of the participants had for turning their children into transborder subjects. The narratives show the link between a transborder life and the elements of the American dream as understood by the parents. A transborderised American dream then is present. This local version of the dream always includes the Mexican side, considers the asymmetry between both countries, and fosters documented border dynamics such as transborderism.

## VI. Conclusion

The narratives of these participants for becoming transborder show a direct link with the contemporary understanding of the American dream. To be transborder was a decision made by the parents as a strategy to access a better life and working conditions. This could be granted by receiving U.S. education that would help the learners to be proficient in English and by teaching them to navigate U.S. society. The longing for the American dream or a local version of it, is an important element of the transborder identity. In this context, the American dream is not a set concept, and its meaning is subjectively adapted. Data by the Pew Research Center (2017) shows the link between the dream and better living conditions. Moreover, the parents of these participants were convinced of the role of education as an equaliser in U.S. society. To attend school in the U.S. also meant to be formed as a U.S. citizen and thus, integrate into such society seamlessly.

In the context of the Cali-Baja region, the reasons for becoming transborder varied. However, it is possible to identify at least three main categories for such practice. The first category refers to having access to the U.S. and the dream via nationality or a student visa, while residing on the Mexican side of the border. For example, Jimena, Dominique and Mariana shared how being born in the U.S. was a planned family strategy. Parents perceived U.S. citizenship, coupled with receiving U.S. education, as the ticket for a better future. Similar is the case of Josemar, whose transborder practice was planned to provide him a safer environment in the U.S. Moreover, to be transborder is not exclusive to binational people. Edna, Anely, Selene, Marisa, and Arantxa were born in Mexico and became transborder to improve their English language skills and increase their chances for better job opportunities.

In contrast, to become transborder to partly remain in the U.S. occurs when families have to relocate to the Mexican side due to economic hardship or migration policies. The narratives of Vanessa and Jesús reflect the economic struggles suffered by the family. They were both born and settled in the U.S. where their families migrated looking for a better quality of life. Unexpectedly, and without much anticipation, they became transborder to continue studying in the U.S. This category for becoming transborder understands the practice as a mechanism to partly remain in the U.S.

Lastly, Kora's family story shows that transborderism can be an intergenerational element of identity in her family. This third category for becoming transborder understands transborderism most and foremost as a family norm. Her family has been transborder for at least four generations in Mexicali and Calexico by attending school in the U.S. Her narrative is illustrative of the changing dynamics of transborderism, contributing to its historicization in this border region.

Transborderism scholarship has been mostly framed by postmodern understandings. However, Kora's family history shows the existence of transborder practices since the early 1900s. Therefore, the history of transborderism in the Cali-Baja Region is related to the establishment of the geopolitical border and not to dynamics exclusively related to globalization. This understanding also aids scholarship to reflect on the limits of transborderism in region where geopolitical border



are placed or displaced. Furthermore, this exercise of historicization illustrates the development of transborder practices adapting to changing contexts and state policies.

Moreover, the economic and social asymmetry between Mexico and the U.S. lies at the core of transborderism. It is also observable in the transborderised American dream of the parents of the learners. This local understanding of the American dream stands in contrast to a worse Mexican reality. However, the peculiarity of this adapted understanding is the inclusion of the Mexican side as a place for opportunity. The transborderised American dream is pursued from the Mexican side without necessarily migrating permanently to the U.S. This pursuit of the American dream is inherited from parents to children and to the younger generations. This resembles other dynamics between Mexico and the U.S. that have been replicated for decades. For example, Mexican migration to the U.S. is deeply rooted in the history of some Mexican communities. In some cases, to emigrate to the U.S. is more than a rational decision but rather linked to family history. Just as observed in the third category for becoming transborder in this chapter.

Furthermore, it was observed the important role of education in becoming transborder throughout the categories. It was a determinant condition for meeting the objectives of the transborder practice by the participants. Education in the U.S. is still considered to be a social equaliser fostering upward mobility breaking with birth economic and class conditions. To be born or to study English in the U.S. was not considered sufficient to meet the family objectives of accessing better living conditions. In this sense, to receive U.S. education also meant the development of skillsets required by the U.S. labour market and lifestyle. Such skillsets and U.S. societal immersion could only be fully developed in schools on the U.S. side of the border. In this sense, education was pivotal for the transborder practices of the participants of this research.

The objective of this chapter was to analyse and understand the reasons for becoming transborder. It was observed that such reasons are related to the parent's wishes for the future of their children. In this sense, the chapter looked at 'home' as the location where the process began. Moreover, the narratives presented show the complexity of transborderism and of transborder practices at the Cali-Baja border. Although at least three different categories present the reasons for becoming transborder, in practice these former pupils and students had similar a daily dynamic. This is particularly true for those attending private schools.

Having established the reasons for becoming transborder, it is possible to proceed to the analysis of the enactment of transborder practices that would contribute to the consistency of the figure of a transborder pupil and student. This exercise is guided by the research question seeking to determine the challenges faced by this demographic group in their transborder practices. U.S. lands Ports of Entry are an important location to research in this puzzle since crossing the checkpoints is considered the hardest part of a transborder life. The relevance for researching Ports of Entry located in the Cali-Baja region relates to two main points: i) the importance of border checkpoints are mostly missing from Mexico-U.S. border scholarship including phenomenological accounts, and ii) transborder learners encounter here one of the two power structures they navigate daily. To transit the Ports of Entry requires political and empirical knowledge of power practices and

counter-pedagogies. Although to transit a Port of Entry can be seen as a straightforward process, in reality it is a complex site where race, gender, identity, politics, forms of control, economics, and culture interplay. In this sense, the following chapter analyses the role of Ports of Entry and the power dynamics present in transborder practices at the Cali-Baja region.

### PORT OF ENTRY: PLACE OF EXCEPTION

#### I. Introduction

The aesthetics of land Ports of Entry (PoE) in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego is hard to describe. On one hand, the U.S. border control infrastructure is severe and mostly grey. Cameras, signs in English of what is prohibited, iron bars, the sound of iron revolving doors, barbed wire, guns, uniforms, sniffer dogs, the pictures of the U.S. President and Vice President, decorate this site. However, and just before reaching the border checkpoint, a splash of colour, tastes, symbols, sellers, smells, and sounds collide. Mexican food, snacks, newspapers, magazines, music, religious figures, migrants asking for money to continue their journey, Mexican souvenirs, toys, currency exchangers, car cleaners, cars and pedestrians queueing, and people chatting illustrate the Mexican side of the PoE. The closer one gets to the checkpoint, all the sensorial stimuli dissipates and the site becomes grey, somewhat quieter, and serious. The music and voices are dialled-down; visas or passports are out. It's time to perform.

To hold a visa or a passport is not enough to access the U.S. from the Mexican side. Empirical knowledge on how to navigate this site is passed on from generation to generation adapting the information accordingly with the political contexts. Counter-pedagogies on how to cross the border are developed depending on individual situations and taught from an early age. For instance, as a very young kid, my family taught me to always be awake when approaching the checkpoint or else CBP officers would think that I was being drugged and trafficked by my parents. To stand straight, to be serious and quiet, to roll down my side of the window, to answer to my name, to have the seatbelt fastened, to not joke by any means, to not eat or drink, to say that we are going to Walmart in case asked by the officers, were just some of the instructions my parents gave me and repeated every single time we crossed the border. The consequences of not following these instructions could be being denied access to the U.S., having our visas removed, getting our car taken away, imprisonment, etc. These local performative counter-pedagogies are sociopolitical elements of the region and transborder practices. The contrasting PoE ecology is to a certain extent a snapshot of what being a transborder learner entails, to be constantly transiting through power structures, modes of control, and sociocultural norms.

As the border itself, the experiences of border crossing are subjective and relativised by each border crosser. None of the participants in this research shared only positive experiences crossing the border northbound or southbound. However, they emphasised different factors that interplayed at the time of crossing. These could be the biases of the U.S. CBP officers and international political events. Recent research regarding the perceptions transborder commuters have on U.S. CBP officers (Castañeda, E., 2020) is welcomed in Mexico-U.S. border scholarship. Aligned with

Castañeda and in this context, to analyse the role of land Ports of Entry in the transborder practice of learners is essential.

The physical building and infrastructure of U.S. land Ports of Entry vary from checkpoint to checkpoint even within the same city. This is the case of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego holding multiple border checkpoints. Such crossing ports have evolved from mere tents to the mega techno-structures they are today (Fernandez, G., 2019, Gallego, E., 2018). Although the analysis of such buildings is interesting and illustrative, it is out of the scope of this research. However, this chapter looks at the power complexities and experiences of former transborder pupils or students when transiting the Ports of Entry at the Cali-Baja region. Through a phenomenological approach, this chapter shows the way this site is lived.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the claim that northbound border crossing is the hardest part of a transborder life. It does so by analysing and discussing the aggressive dynamics present at the land Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego, as part of a power structure. The first section discusses the role of U.S. CBP officers highlighting the power, discriminatory practices, and lack of accountability of the organisation. Then, fear is analysed as a border norm suffered by transborder pupils and students, particularly after the 2001 terrorist attacks. The attacks changed the border crossing dynamic as these were absorbed by the U.S. national security narrative. As a consequence, border waiting times increased from less than an hour, to four hours in both border cities. The chapter continues analysing the consequences of the harsh border dynamic such as the implementation of the student lane. Then, gender violence is included as part of the analysis of PoE dynamics. The last part of the chapter addresses the time-space dimension via the analysis of time control mechanisms at the border. Lastly, border hacks developed by transborder pupils and students to cope with the mechanisms of border control are presented.

## **II. The Sovereigns: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is one of the largest law enforcement organisations in the world with more than 60,000 officers. The organisation officially declares holding a comprehensive approach to border dynamics that require control, regulation, and protection of people and goods. U.S. CBP was created in 2003 along with the Department of Homeland Security as one of the results of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. This organisation is the conglomeration of groups dedicated to border law enforcement and protection such as: Border Patrol, Immigration Inspectors, U.S. Customs Service, Agricultural Inspectors and Texas Rangers, the Office of Air and Marine, and the Office of Field Operations. U.S. Customs Service was the oldest organisation established in 1789. Immigration Inspectors came into place in 1891, followed by Agricultural Inspectors in 1912. U.S. Border Patrol agents were established in 1924. Each organisation was created in response to a specific economic, social or political event.

U.S. Border Patrol had the objective of securing U.S. borders from smuggling alcohol in 1924. During the Prohibition Era alcohol and undocumented people were forbidden from entering the U.S. Since then, the U.S. Border Patrol has been changing tactics, methodologies, and views on how to secure the 6,000-mile border shared with Mexico. However, in certain ways, the objective remained (CBP, 2019).

Former U.S. Border Patrol Chief from 2010 to 2015, Michael J. Fisher, presented the publication *Holding the Line in the 21st Century* written by Robert D. Schroeder. The publication consisted of three articles explaining the shifts of Border Patrol throughout history. In the first article, published in 2011, it was established and for that matter accepted, the porosity of the border being incapable of fully preventing illegal crossings of goods and people. In this sense, CBP understands a secure border as one of low-risk where detection and interdiction are of high probability (Schroeder, R., 2011). The aftermath of ending the Bracero Program in 1964 showed an increment of undocumented remains in the U.S. territories rising to 1.7 million in 1979, to 3.2 million by 1986. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) had the objective to regularize the illegal immigrants living in the U.S. in 1986. However, the Act also contemplated increasing the number of border protection officers from 3,000 to 5,000. The incremented number of officers made it possible to implement large-scale operations along the border, and in 1993 Operation Hold the Line began in El Paso, Texas. In 1994 Operation Gatekeeper was implemented in San Diego, California. Such strategies failed as undocumented crossings and smuggled goods to the U.S. continued.

On 11 September 2001 the efficiency and strategy conducted to this point by Border Patrol was questioned. In 2003, when the agency was absorbed by the newly created U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the dynamics for border crossing changed. A 'new normal' was established. From 2004 to 2010, CBP's budget increased exponentially and it began developing strategies with the contribution of additional governmental agencies. Notions about border security changed and the number of apprehensions or interceptions of illegal goods was no longer evidence of a secured border. U.S. CBP strived for better situational awareness to control the border.

In 2012, the Border Patrol released its 2012–2016 Strategic Plan introducing the Risk Assessment approach to border security and control. This Plan put forward the 'art of how a Border Patrol Agent finds and tracks smugglers crossing the border through coordinated patrols' (Schroeder, R., 2011:18). The use of new geospatial intelligence and technology (GEOINT) was also introduced. Both methods had the objective of increasing the situational awareness to aid CBP officers with tasks while increasing the mileage of monitored border. Border security was no longer achieved by the containment of smuggled goods and undocumented apprehensions. The assessment of potential risks a person may represent to U.S. national security, was established as an element in border protection assessment. This risk assessment is conducted by crisscrossing databases of criminals records and the judgment of CBP officers on the ground. The Homeland Department defines risk as 'the potential for unwanted outcome resulting from an incident, event, or occurrence, as determined by its likelihood and the associated consequences' (DHS, 2010:7). It is in this sense that risk assessment is linked to probability and not to certainty.

With this change of approach to border security, CBP strived to develop a comprehensive understanding of border risks but failed at risk assessment of documented border. A six-year-old transborder pupil has to go through the same process as a potential smuggler at a Port of Entry. This kind of daily scrutiny is based on the notion that everyone could be a potential national security risk when entering the U.S. It is possible to think that a risk cannot be assessed without a certain standardised procedure. However, the enormous technological apparatus of surveillance and biometric databases should be used to implement a differentiated approach for daily commuters. In no way is it assumed that a daily commuter could never become a risk for U.S. national security. However, the probable risk assessment is determined by the judgment of CBP officers and not solely based on the available intelligence information. In this sense, the judgement of a CBP officer could be biased disregarding the additional data that should drive the officer's decision.

Regardless of the developed approaches for a low-risk border, U.S. Customs and Border Protection still aims to increment the number of deployed agents at the south border. Each year, officers: i) process 390 million people through all entry ports (land, air, sea), ii) declare inadmissible 127,000 persons at PoEs, iii) apprehend approximately 416,000 persons at PoEs, iv) arrest 8,000 wanted criminals and, v) identify 320,000 persons of national security concern (CBP, 2019). U.S. government is constantly increasing the number of CBP elements. Particularly, new officers might not be aware of the traditional transborder dynamic of pupils and students in border communities as suggested by **Aurora**.

Aurora is a former transborder pupil graduating from high school in 1999. She was briefly a U.S. CBP officer. Her husband is still a U.S. CBP officer. She shared the way she used to cross the border from Mexicali as a transborder learner underscoring the role of the U.S. CBP officer in the process:

With me it wasn't that hard [to cross the border] it was just 'U.S. citizen' whether I came across by foot or by car, we weren't really inspected. The officers were very... it depends on the officer. My husband is an officer still there and he does say that 'we see these kids every day, just come on, we know you, go ahead'. He does mention he notices the new officers are the ones giving the kids a hard time, the new ones, the young ones that they have no work ethic, that they just got hired right after high school and those are the ones, but the senior officers that have been there forever don't have any issue. I know a lot of the ladies that do the carpool to Calexico Mission School and they tell me 'it's the new people, it's the new officers because so and so officer doesn't do that because they know us, we've been crossing for years, but are the new ones, people that we haven't seen before' but they do mention that is mostly within your same ethnicity and females. I don't know why that is, it baffles me.

Her decision to become a U.S. CBP officer was based on the benefits and the retirement plan the job offered. Furthermore, she admitted never having a negative experience with any CBP officers as a pupil. When she joined the organisation was targeted with racist and sexist comments from her colleagues and instructors. During the first week, she reported her instructor for making a comment that made her feel uncomfortable. Her Anglo colleagues argued that *Latinas* and *Latinos* officers are biased and not able to conduct the job properly. Such comments suggest U.S. CBP officers can be racially biased since training.

Racial profiling has been historically a practice of U.S. Border Patrol and inherited by U.S. CBP. Officers of the latter organisation are allowed to stop people or vehicles to conduct inspections and document verification when 'reasonable suspicion' exists. This action of stopping and searching people without a lawful order has been disputed in U.S. courts since the 1960s. The United States vs. Brignoni-Ponce case in 1974 is of most importance, showing how race can be an element of consideration by the Border Patrol. The Court ruled that the 'characteristic appearance of persons who live in Mexico' (Powell, L. F. & Supreme Court of the United States, 1974) is reasonable suspicion and thus, inspections are allowed.

The Brignoni-Ponce Court rule made the Border Patrol a racist organisation lawfully allowing racial profiling. Aurora experienced institutionalised racism during training academy meaning that racism is acceptable and perhaps endorsed inside U.S. CBP enforcement. With this panorama, racism and racist practices are present at the border crossing ports to the detriment of all border crossers. This is particularly true when border crossers have a 'characteristic appearance of persons who live in Mexico' as established by the Court rule. Transborder pupils and students, are no exception.

U.S. CBP officers at the Ports of Entry personify the entire law system subjectively deciding the future of documented border crossers. Carl Schmitt defines the sovereign as 'he who decides on the exception' (Schmitt, C., 1923:5). In a Schmittian sense, CBP officers are momentary and temporal sovereigns deciding over the exception and exclusion of the law. In *Homo Sacer* published in 1998, Giorgio Agamben analysed a camp as a space pertaining and originated outside the law epitomising the state of exception. The inhabitants of such a space are then reduced to 'bare life' without political rights or status. Examples of camp spaces that experience judicial or political exclusion are refugee camps and military extraordinary prisons such as Guantanamo. Agamben's approach draws from Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault, furthering the analysis of the state of exception. It does so by arguing that those in excluded spaces are also part of a legal order in place for the purpose of excluding. To exclude through the inclusion (Rancière, J., 2004).

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson in 'Border as a Method' (2013) argue that Agamben's approach is regularly interpreted in a technical and binary sense. Mezzadra and Neilson build on Agamben's perspective stating that 'contemporary systems of migration control and detention blur the borders between norm and exception, governance and sovereignty' (Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B., 2013:169). In this sense, the authors claimed that the limited binary notion of living either inside or outside a legal system, cannot answer questions of contemporary exercise of power. Such

argument refers to the exercise of power related to border or immigration detention centres that are interested in administrating and controlling the time and space of the immigrants. Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) also claim the objective of temporary detention centres is to control immigration flows to certain countries with deportation regimes. In the same sense, Wendy Brown argues the function of borders is of management: 'these new walls serve to regulate rather than to exclude legal and illegal labour' (Brown, W., 2008:16) The perspective of Brown, Mezzadra and Neilson on the exercise of control by borders contributes to the understanding of the harsh dynamics of border management at the Ports of Entry.

### III. The Border Norm: Fear

The control and management of documented border crossings and migration has been absorbed by the national security continuum since the 1900s, the year of 2001 being of most relevance (Vaughan-Williams, N., 2010). Although the terrorist attack to the World Trade Center happened hundreds of miles away from the Cali-Baja border, it definitely affected local dynamics. Border commuters began experiencing the new border norm that included harsh practices of control and harassment. Transborder people including pupils started to experience anxiety, fear, and stress at the PoE. This new border norm is reflected in the following accounts.

**Alejandro** has been a binational transborder for most of his life. He remembers his mother's reaction when the terrorist attacks happened in 2001:

Al día siguiente (del 9/11) mi mamá me llevó a la WalMart a comprarme una camiseta de los Estados Unidos y me la puso. Mi mamá obviamente pensaba 'que la gente supiera que *I am proud, I am not the enemy*'.

(The next day (after 9/11) my mom took me to Walmart and bought me a t-shirt of the United States and I put it on. My mom obviously thought 'people should know that I am proud, I am not the enemy'.)

His mother immediately read the U.S political situation and understood that things would get harder for people from a different ethnic and cultural background. This is an example of how people at the border, especially transborder, are affected by political events and subsequent policies.

**Anely** recalls feeling the change of border surveillance and control:

La seguridad se incrementó, lo que preguntaba, lo que hacían y lo que inspeccionaban. Todos parecíamos terroristas. Sin importar que fueras estudiante o no, todos eran presuntos culpables. Aparte de aguantar más tiempo en la línea, también tenía que aguantar el estrés de ellos (CBP officers) porque entiendes que hay alertas y ellos también se estresan y se tienen



que poner más duros. Pero nos cambió la vida a toda la frontera y a todas las demás fronteras también.

(Security was increased, what they were asking, what they did and what they inspected. We all looked like terrorists to them. Regardless of being a student or not, everyone was presumed guilty. Besides from waiting in line for longer time, I also had to endure the stress from the CBP officers because you understand that there are warnings, and they also get stressed and have to be tougher. But it changed the lives of the entire border and of all other borders as well.)

The national security continuum absorbed all types of border crossers. The process for granting U.S. admissibility in land PoEs is not clear. Personal belongings can be checked without a warrant. Corporal cavities and electronic devices can be inspected when 'reasonable suspicion' arises. In the context of transborder pupils and students at the Mexico-U.S. border, this means having backpacks and lunchboxes scanned daily. They are also interrogated when crossing to the U.S. The pupils and students are aware of the possibility of being denied entrance. In the words of Mezzadra and Neilson 'by showing how borders establish multiple points of control along key lines and geographies of wealth and power, we see inclusion existing in a continuum with exclusion, rather than in opposition to it' (Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B., 2013:7). Violence, harassment, and fear are elements of the exclusionary practices in continuum with inclusive ones, at the Ports of Entry.

Systematic harassment is not homogenous and can be subjectively adapted by the CBP officers to each border crosser. Stories from the participants go from being asked the 'normal questions' to being detained. The following experiences show the fear, nervousness, harassment, and violence experienced by the participants at Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. Some of the participants also shared the way such border fear affected them in later adulthood.

Such is the case of **Sara** and **Abraham**, two former transborder pupils at the Mexicali-Calexico border who attended primary school in the U.S. Sara also attended secondary school in Calexico Mission School. They felt nervous daily when crossing the border and recognised the link between those negative feelings at the border with other situations.

**Sara:**

En ciertos momentos y muy frecuentemente sentía ese nervio o miedo al cruzar, me hace estar más familiarizada con la situación misma de cruzar. Cuando me fui de intercambio crucé a Tánger, no me causó nada no entender nada porque yo ya estoy acostumbrada a cierto nivel de agresividad. Absolutamente todos los días y cada una de las veces que cruzaba me aterraba la idea de que me fueran a negar la entrada y quitar mi visa.

(At certain times and very often I would feel that nervousness or fear when crossing, it makes me be more familiar with the situation of crossing itself. When I went abroad in an exchange

programme, I crossed to Tangier and I did not feel a thing when I was not able to understand anything, because I am already used to a certain level of aggressiveness. Absolutely every day and every single time I crossed the border (to Calexico) I was terrified that they (CBP officers) would deny me entrance and take away my visa.)

### **Abraham:**

Yo no era de los que brincaba en el asiento, pero sabía que cruzar era un ritual porque cuando iba a la OLGA, hacíamos *carpool* y siempre nos decían 'saquen el pasaporte, sentados, estensen listos'. Yo intentaba no causarles más estrés a los papás porque gritaban, ¡cállense chamacos! Me daba miedo la sensación de separación, que me separaran de mi mamá y miedo al castigo. Aunque yo no haya hecho nada, pero porque otros lo estaban haciendo, con la percepción de un niño que estaba en otro país. No tenía teléfono, en ese momento mi inglés no era muy bueno. Ese miedo de que no voy a poder defenderme y que voy a estar solo, no va a haber manera de que me salven. Eso afectó mucho mi desarrollo como estudiante y como persona y hasta ahora lo estoy controlando. Yo hago *dismiss* al conflicto para no meterme en problemas, pero hay gente que es su *modus operandi*, discutir y hacer ruido para obtener lo que quieren. Tal vez esas personas que hacen eso no tienen ese miedo de que les vayan a quitar algo que es frágil como es el permiso para entrar a Estados Unidos o que les quiten una beca. Eso fue constante para mí. Estos miedos te afectan a un nivel psicológico que son de por vida. Estaba completamente a merced de lo que dijera el policía. Recuerdo pensar que CBP es una persona que tiene el poder de hacer lo que sea y que puede usar su poder sobre un niño.

(I was not one of those who jumped on the seat because I knew that crossing [the border] was a ritual because when I went to OLGA, we did carpool and they [parents] always told us 'take out your passport, sit down, be ready'. I tried not to cause more stress over the parents because they shouted, 'shut up kids!'. I was afraid of that feeling of separation, that they could separate me from my mother and fear of punishment. Although I did not do anything, but others were doing it, with the perception of a child who was in another country. I had no phone, at that time my English was not very good. I feared that I would not be able to defend myself and would be alone, without salvation. That deeply affected my development as a student and as a person and is until today that I am controlling it. I dismiss conflict, I don't like to get into trouble. For some people it is their modus operandi, to discuss and make noise to get what they want. Maybe those people who do that, did not have that fear that something could be taken from you that is fragile such as the permission to enter the United States, or to have a scholarship removed. That was constant for me. These fears affect you on a psychological level for life. I was completely at the mercy of what the policeman (CBP officer) said. I remember thinking that a CBP is someone who has the power to do anything and can use such power over a child.)

**Anely** experienced nervousness and anxiety before getting to the Calexico border crossing checkpoint:

Siempre he sido muy nerviosa y temerosa a la ley y pensaba ¿qué tal si me preguntan esto? o ¿qué tal si hago esto mal? era ese tipo de estrés que me causaba. Era algo diario y yo ya estaba programada. El estrés era también al prepararte antes, asegurarte que traieras el pasaporte.

(I have always been very nervous person and fearful of the law and I used to think, what if they (CBP) ask me this or that? Or what if I do this wrong? That was the kind of stress that caused me. It was daily and I was already programmed for it. I also felt stressed while preparing to go to school, making sure that I brought my passport.)

**Gustavo** experienced another form of control when he and his family were put into unnecessary waiting in secondary revision when crossing to San Diego:

Solo de acordarme me duele la cabeza. Una vez nos (a él, sus hermanos y su papá) mandaron a segunda revisión y era muy temprano. Nos hicieron esperar tres horas. Después de que nos revisaron el carro nos pidió nuestros documentos y nunca regresó el oficial, quizás se le olvidó o no sé. Nosotros no queríamos alarmar así que hasta que pasó otro oficial y le dijimos que *'we've been waiting here for over 3 hours'*, se llevó nuestros documentos y cuando regresó nos dijo *'you could've left long ago'*. No sé qué pasó, quizás el oficial estaba teniendo un mal día, pero deberían de hacer su trabajo con profesionalismo. Ese día llegamos tarde a la escuela y mi papá a su trabajo.

(Just remembering it make my head hurts. Once we [him, his brothers and father] were sent to secondary inspection and it was very early. They made us wait for three hours. After the car was inspected, an officer asked for our documents and he never returned, maybe he forgot or I don't know. We didn't want to be alarmist so it was until another officer passed by that we told him *'we've been waiting here for over 3 hours'*, he then took our documents again and when he came back told us *'you could've left long ago'*. I don't know what happened, maybe the officer was having a bad day but they should do their job professionally. That day we arrived late to school and work.)

The life experiences of **Luis** in the Calexico checkpoint show the change on border hardship after the 2001 terrorist attacks and how he is still being affected:

Cuando estábamos muy chicos era menos requisito lo del pasaporte. Muchos cruzaban diciendo 'American citizen' o 'American born' y no les pedían el pasaporte. A mucha gente se le hacía muy fácil decir 'American citizen' y no eran ciudadanos americanos. A mí me tocó hacerlo una que otra vez cuando tenía como ocho años. A partir del 2001 todo cambió. Hay una persona en Virginia que le pegaba a su esposa y manejaba sin el cinturón y mi nombre es muy similar al de él. Cada vez que cruzaba, a partir del 2001, me detenían y tuve que mandar una carta a *Department of Homeland Security*. Pagué otros \$370 dólares para que me sacaran las huellas de todos los dedos y pudieran verificar que yo no era esa persona. Le agregaron una nota a mi visa. El entrar y salir de Estados Unidos cambió completamente a partir de esa fecha. Hace poco cuando estaba trabajando en Texas estaba cruzando y el oficial me dijo que el Departamento del Estado me tiene marcado como una persona de interés pero que iban a intentar solucionarlo.

(When we were very young, the passport was less of a requirement. Many crossed saying 'American citizen' or 'American born' without being asked for a passport. Many people found it very easy to just say 'American citizen' when they were not American citizens. I also had to do it once in a while when I was about eight years old. As of 2001 everything changed. There is a person in Virginia who beat his wife and drove without the seatbelt fastened, and my name is very similar to his. Every time I crossed, as of 2001, I was stopped and I sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I had to paid additionally \$370 dollars to submit all of my fingerprints once again and so they (DHS) could verify that I was not that person. They added a note to my visa. Entering and leaving the United States changed completely from that date. Recently, when I was working in Texas, I was crossing and the officer told me that the State Department marked me as a person of interest but they were going to try to fix it.)

Some transborder pupils and students have experienced physical violence directly, particularly after the 2001 terrorist attacks. Such was the case of **Josemar**, who is a U.S. citizen and crossed the border daily to San Diego. One day he was going to a wedding in the U.S. and got detained. He shared:

Después del 9/11 todo cambió, la militarización del espacio, las filas, las gentes. A mí una vez me golpearon. CBP me golpeó, me sacaron pistolas entre cinco. Es lo peor que he visto y me pasó a mí. Me hicieron *profile*, manejaba un carro y *I fit the profile*. Es que muchos jóvenes que utilizan el cártel de droga y yo *I fit that perfectly*. Yo traía un carro, un BMW a lo mejor *it was medio flashy*, ese carro traía, iba a una boda entonces iba medio arreglado. Entonces me veía 'profile' ves a un joven cruzando así y llegó un perro y un CBP. No era la primera vez que me detenían ahí antes de llegar al *booth*. Abren una puerta (de su carro), me dijeron 'pon las manos al volante' y me esposan. Yo me frustró y me enoja ¿qué está pasando? Me agarra y

me da un codazo y me azota contra el carro. Me empieza a gritar y en eso llegaron muchos perros y policías. Yo estaba muy alterado. Me sacaron pistolas y me apuntan y yo me quedé callado. Y me decían que 'ya sabían quién era' estaban utilizando *tactics* de *reverse psychology*. Yo me quedé callado y no dije nada. Hasta que me encerraron en el cuarto de atrás y di mi nombre y dije que los iba a demandar. Ya ahí fue diferente porque ya sabían que era *American citizen*, que mi lenguaje era fluido, que no tenía miedo de hablar y que sí sabía de lo que estaba hablando.

(After 9/11 everything changed, the militarization of space, the lines, the people. They hit me once. CBP hit me, they pointed at me with five guns. It's the worst I've seen and experienced. They had me profiled, I drove a certain car and I fit the profile. Many young people are used by drug cartels and I fit that perfectly. I had a car, a BMW, maybe it was a little too flashy and I was going to a wedding so I was well presented. So I looked 'profiled' you see, a young man crossing like this and then a dog [K-9] and a CBP officer came to my car. It was not the first time I was stopped before reaching the booth. They opened my car door and told me 'put your hands on the wheel' and they handcuffed me. I got frustrated and angry, what's going on? He [CBP officer] grabbed and hit me with his elbow and throw me against the car. He began to shout at me and other dogs and officers approached my car as well. I was very upset. They took their guns out and pointed at me and I kept quiet. They told me that 'they already knew who I was' they were using reverse psychology tactics. I kept quiet and said nothing. Until they locked me in the back room and I said my name, and that I was going to sue them. Then things went different because they already knew that I was an American citizen, that my language [English] was fluent, that I wasn't afraid to speak and that I did know what I was talking about.)

Josemar's experience with CBP shows the exercise of violence at the border based on racial profiling. U.S. CBP forces have absolute power to exercise over a person with or without reasonable suspicion. This amount of power coupled with almost non-accountability and military grade weapons, make U.S. CBP an unstoppable force operating with almost complete impunity. During the President Obama administration, a special panel was created due to a crisis within the CBP organisation and the lack of accountability of the officers that committed unlawful acts. Several recommendations were made to the organisation including reforms to increase transparency without any success (Thompson, A.,2019). From 2010 to September 2019, ninety-four people have died under CBP custody including children. Just in 2019, eleven people lost their lives under CBP custody (SBCC, 2019).

**Alejandro** is well aware of the number of lives lost under CBP custody and therefore, how vulnerable he is as a San Diegan commuter. He shared an episode when he voiced the abuse of power and harassment by CBP at the checkpoint:

Hubo un tiempo que cruzaba sin pasaporte porque lo había perdido y cuando cruzaba caminando me vestía bien, con *button shirt* y me peinaba el pelo para que no *harassed me*. Una vez *they were harassing* yo había llegado de Tijuana y nada más con decir Anastasio Rojas<sup>8</sup> se fueron. Me estaban deteniendo y yo no estaba haciendo nada. Voltié a ver a un *officer* y me dijo '*hey come here*' y yo le dije '*hey what are you doing? you don't think that we know about the case of Anastasio Rojas?*' Y ya dijeron '*ok have a nice day*'.

(There was a time that I crossed without a passport because I had lost it and when I crossed walking I dressed well, wearing a button shirt and combed my hair so that I would not be harassed. One time they were harassing me, I had arrived from Tijuana and just by saying Anastasio Rojas they (CBP) left me alone. They were stopping me and I was not doing anything. I turned and looked at an officer and he said 'hey come here' and I said 'hey what are you doing? you don't think we know about the case of Anastasio Rojas?' And then they said, 'ok have a nice day'.)

The narrative by Alejandro reflects the way U.S. CBP harasses border crossers based on racial profiling. By being outspoken about the violence and impunity that characterised such law enforcement, Alejandro showed his awareness of the crimes by U.S. CBP officers. The exercise of power over border crossers occurs throughout the entire border space being more evident at the border crossing lines. Commonly called *la línea* (the line) is an ambivalent space where nothing and everything happens. Michel de Certeau defines a space as a 'frequented place', 'an intersection of moving bodies' (Michel de Certeau in Auge, M., 1995:79). The line is a space subjectively negotiated and mediated by those who constantly transit it. The interactions in this space occurred mainly between border crossers and law enforcement officers. However, as approaching the inspection booth, the interactions are additionally mediated by signs and the designed infrastructure. At that point, the mechanisms of control mandate over the place where subjectivities and identities are no longer relevant. In such a place, all border crossers are under the same scrutiny and precarious conditions regardless of their nationality, making it a non-place.

Supermodernity has created non-places where subjectivities do not hold an important role. Augé (1995) explains that 'a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity is a non-place' (Augé, M., 1995:78). For instance, a hotel is considered a non-place as it is not conditioned by the differentiated identities of the visitors. The purposes of such non-places are rather related to the activities undertaken in them. Concurring with Iglesias Prieto (Iglesias Prieto,

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<sup>8</sup> In 2010 Anastasio Hernández Rojas was killed in San Diego, close to the border crossing port. Witnesses and a video showed Anastasio lying on the ground being punched, kicked, and electrocuted with tasers by a dozen of CBP officers, while handcuffed. He was being driven to the border to be deported. Anastasio was Mexican but lived in the U.S. for more than twenty-seven years and was a father of five. He was deported once before but crossed back to the U.S. When arrested by CBP for the second time and placed in a detention facility, he wanted to submit a complaint against CBP officers for abuse and violence towards him. No CBP officers have been held accountable for Anastasio's death (Nevins, J. 2012).

N., 2019, personal interview, 12 June) the border crossing line and Port can be considered a non-place. She explained:

Este momento (del cruce) es el de mayor riesgo y el de mayor tensión, ahí es donde se están jugando el todo y pasa todos los días. Por eso es agotador y hace tanto daño psicológico. Nunca se sienten seguros (estudiantes transfronterizos). Es un no-lugar. Donde no tienen ningún tipo de control y eres vulnerable a que te destruyan la vida con un papel o con una pregunta. Ha pasado de todo, la cantidad de abusos, *sexual harassment*, y procesos de maduración veloces porque empezaron a cruzar muy jóvenes la frontera y observan una cantidad de abusos.

(This moment [of northbound crossing] is the one of greatest risk and tension, is where they risk it all, and happens every day. That is why is exhausting and does so much psychological damage. They [transborder pupils and students] never feel safe. Is a non-place. Where they do not have any control and are vulnerable to have their life destroyed by a piece of paper or by a question. Everything happens there [PoE], the amount of abuses, sexual harassment, and fast maturation processes, since they began crossing the border at a young age and observe a number of abuses).

In such non-places or land Ports of Entry at the Mexico-U.S. border, subjectivities, identity or nationalities are not significant as everyone is just turned into a potential national risk. The dynamics at these PoEs are not differentiated recognising the heterogeneity of border crossers coming from the Mexican side. That is the shared identity that is contractually established with this non-place (Augé, M., 1995). However, and in the case of Mexicali-Calexico, one particular effort was made to change the absence of a differentiated protocol with regards to transborder students and pupils. This was the result of the hard circumstances for northbound border crossings after the 2001 attacks. As the narratives presented in this section show, everything changed for the Mexico-U.S. border that day. The waiting lines and number of inspections increased exponentially. The new border norm affected the mental health of transborder pupils and students. Longer waiting times became a relevant factor for the deterioration of such mental health and academic performance. For these reasons, a student lane at the PoE was demanded without considering the possible repercussions of its establishment. Fear as a border norm experienced by transborder learners in multiple ways was far from disappearing.

#### **IV. Post 2001 Border: The Student Lane**

After the 2001 terrorist attacks, schools located at the Cali-Baja border stripe started experiencing extraordinary absences or delays from their transborder learners. The new post-2001 border normal was a detriment to this subgroup as the pupils were getting punished for being late. This affected their academic records. In response to the new border situation Mrs. Smith, a former principal of Calexico Mission School, met with the director of the border port of Calexico West Port of Entry. The meeting's objective was to mitigate some of the border hardship for the pupils. The solution was to establish a temporary and intermittent 'student lane' at the PoEs in Calexico and San Diego.

The student lane was a fast solution to the immediate challenge without considering the possible repercussions for transborder learners. The lane runs from 7:00 to 9:30 on weekday mornings reducing the waiting times of this population. However, it only benefits those attending U.S. private schools as public school transborder pupils could get expelled if the purpose for crossing is revealed. The student lane only reduces border waiting times. It does not reduce border inspections or violence. More importantly, it does not grant U.S. admissibility automatically.

The student lane had negative repercussions at the PoE in Calexico. The lane created discontents on the rest of the border crossers. The pupils and students using the special lane began experiencing even more violence. This time, it came from other border crossers that believed the student lane was making crossings even slower, as the learners were given crossing priority during the mornings. However, to experience violence from border crossers waiting in line at the PoE was not new for the participants. Prior to the establishment of the student lane, these former pupils and students had mechanisms to reduce waiting times such as joining other learners already queuing. It is important to underscore that most transborder pupils were unaccompanied minors, that is, they had no parental or adult supervision while crossing the border. The majority of the participants remember being shouted or whistled at when joining a group of friends. To be at the receiving end of aggressive comments was also regular.

**Arantxa** experienced a more aggressive event at the Calexico checkpoint:

Había pleitos entre las personas que no entendían por qué nos daban más privilegio a nosotros los estudiantes sobre las personas que estaban desde las seis de la mañana haciendo fila. Nuestra fila sí estaba larga, pero era un poco más fluida que las otras filas. Una vez nos estaban gritando cosas como groserías o nos decían ¿por qué ustedes sí y nosotros no? En esa fila habíamos estudiantes de todas las edades, niños de preescolar. Ese día todos los varones se pusieron de barrera para que no se acercaran tanto a los demás estudiantes porque si nos estaban gritando mucho. Esto pasaba sobretodo en días específicos en que se hace mucha fila. Era siempre ir con la incomodidad de que alguien te va a decir o hacer algo.



(There were arguments and problems with those who did not understand why pupils and students had more privilege over people waiting in line since six in the morning. Our lane was long but it was a little more fluid than the other lanes. One time, they were yelling swearwords at us or telling us, why you and not us? In that lane there were learners of all ages, even preschool children. One day, male students created a barrier so other border crossers wouldn't get too close to us because they were yelling at us a lot. This happened on specific days when lines are usually longer. I was always going with some discomfort knowing that someone could tell or do something to me.)

**Dominique** also shared her experience using the student lane in San Diego:

Tenía que pasar a la gente que estaba haciendo fila y me incomodaba el que ellos pensaran que yo 'me sentía más que ellos' porque yo llevaba uniforme o porque yo cruzaba más rápido. No me llegaron a decir algo, pero con las miradas que te hacen sabes lo que están pensando.

(I had to pass by the people waiting in line and it made me uncomfortable that they could think that I was 'feeling superior to them' because I was wearing my uniform or because I could cross faster. They never told me anything but just by the way they were looking at me you could know what they were thinking.)

The consequences and violence targeting learners were not taken into consideration when the student lane was established. The temporary student lane should continue functioning but in a separated area where the pupils and students could feel safer and avoid violent conflicts with the rest of crossers. Since its implementation, this lane has not suffered any kind of modification or adaptation, regardless of the experiences of the students using it. This is indicative that its purpose is related to the number of pupils and students crossing to school on time, and unrelated to their wellbeing and safety. Violence at the PoEs is overwhelming making transborder learners vulnerable due to their age and being unaccompanied most of the times. However, fear and violence is experienced even more by transborder girls and young women transiting this site. Gender violence at the Ports of Entry was also observed in the narratives of the participants of this research.

## **V. Gender Violence at the U.S. Land Port of Entry**

When interviewing former transborder pupils and students, gender violence was present in the descriptions of the Port of Entry. It was conceived as a characteristic of the border ecology. Women transborderers are victims of sexual harassment generally from border crossers and U.S. CBP officers at the checkpoints.

In the 1980s, a gender perspective was introduced in migration studies. However, this was related to undocumented border crossings (Donato, K., Gabaccia, D., Holdaway, J., Manalansan,

M., Pessar, P., 2006). Moreover, gender violence suffered by documented girls and women at the Ports of Entry has not been explored broadly in border studies. Is in this sense the narratives of female participants are of most relevance to the understanding of the complexity of aggressive practices at Ports of Entry and its power structure.

As it has been stated previously, U.S. CBP officers can be racially biased. Furthermore, the lack of accountability permits racist and violent practices towards immigrants and border crossers. For instance, in 2016 and 2019 a couple of Facebook groups by U.S. CBP officers were made public. The nature of those posts included explicit sexist violence (The Plain View Project, 2017). The posts targeted particularly Latin women. The investigation launched in relation the participants in such groups identified sixty-two active officers and eight former officers. No further actions had been taken as the investigation is still ongoing (Sands G. and Valencia, N., 2019). Such sexual harassment behaviour is reflected in the narratives of a group of female participants.

For instance, four participants crossing by foot to Calexico and San Diego said they felt uncomfortable during the checkpoint interaction with the CBP officer. One of them felt offended in the Calexico checkpoint. The nature of the comments was related to her body. One participant remembered thinking the CBP officer was being flirtatious and asked about her activities. However, none of the participants filed a complaint for misconduct as it was perceived as pointless and could potentially bring repercussions for them. Moreover, male border crossers were also sexually harassing them at the Ports of Entry.

This form of sexual harassment included sexual comments, offences, and whistling directed to transborder girls or young adults. Such harassment happened while waiting in line or walking through the Port of Entry. Three participants at the Calexico Port of Entry said that it was common to hear sexual comments related to school uniforms. In contrast, none of the male participants of this research commented feeling sexually harassed at the Ports of Entry. In this sense, the descriptions of the PoEs by female participants were more severe than those by male participants. Most female participants specifically described the PoE as a dangerous place based almost solely on gender violence.

Such narratives by female former transborder learners reflect one additional type of violence girls and women have to endure constantly when transiting the PoE. It is important to underscore the participants were minors and unaccompanied when victims of sexual harassment with the exception of one. For this reason, it is essential to include a gender perspective when developing policies for the border region, and when looking at the practices in Ports of Entry in the Mexico-U.S. border (Meneses, M., 2021). Without a doubt, further research is required in this matter. In this context, border violence and control is executed in different forms. Time control and management are the most used tactics at this place deeply affecting transborder population as the following section accounts.

## VI. Border Time-Space Dimension

As presented previously, time is one of the most important elements when looking at border crossing dynamics. After the 2001 terrorist attacks, time control through long waiting times was also a deterrence for northbound border crossings. Overwhelmingly, 100% of the participants of this research considered waiting times for northbound crossings to be the most difficult aspect of the transborder practice. This negative part of the dynamic could also affect their family. Regardless of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego being adjacent cities, long border waiting times make the U.S. seem farther away.

Currently, the use of technological platforms helps with time management by enabling fast solutions. This sense of instantaneity adds value to time, impacting perceptions of time and space. Karl Marx foresaw capitalism inevitably compressing time and space through the acceleration of capital. The faster the capital is invested in the production of goods, the faster it will return in the form of profit. This notion of time-space compression has been of interest especially for geographers like David Harvey (1989) and Doreen B. Massey (1999). It has also been included in other fields such as media and communications. Recently, migration studies reflected on time-space compression through different examples including virtual migration (Mezzadra, N. and Neilson, B., 2013).

In this vein, Ports of Entry are places where time is managed with the capacity of compressing or elongating the space. Such daily compression and expansion can be measured by the time spent at these crossing checkpoints. However, time is subjectively perceived by each border crosser. Thus, diverse temporalities and border thickness are created. The border as a non-place can be transited, measured, and perceived 'in units of time' (Augé, M., 1995:104). Time dimension should be included in the analysis of the Mexico-U.S. border and the PoEs. To clarify, this time dimension should not be confused with the element of temporality of borders. Time dimension in this thesis refers to the time required to cross the border through a land Port of Entry, and its sociopolitical implications.

The use of technology at the Mexico-U.S. border should make U.S. admissibility faster. The use of biometrics, crisscrossing of databases, and background checks are supposed to help with this objective. Moreover, faster border crossings would benefit local border economy. A joint study conducted by SANDAG and Caltrans in 2007, calculated the economic impact of border delays. The results showed that border delays cost approximately \$7.2 billion of U.S. dollars. Such delays were related to crossings of private cars, pedestrians, and trucks. The same study also showed that an additional fifteen minutes of border delay would cost \$1 billion of U.S. dollars and 34,000 jobs per year in the U.S. In contrast, it would cost the Mexican economy a maximum of 2.3 million U.S. dollars (SANDAG, 2007).

In November 2018, President Donald Trump closed one Port of Entry in Tijuana-San Diego for a few hours to stop the Central American Caravan. This episode costed local businesses approximately 5.3 million U.S. dollars in lost sales (Horsley, S., 2018). In this border context, time is indeed money.

Such economic interdependence at the border stripe has been of interest for both Democratic and Republican governments agreeing on the implementation of specific programmes. U.S. Customs and Border Protection jointly with the Border and Transportation Security Directorate, developed the pilot for The Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) programme in 1995. This programme would benefit U.S. nationals and foreigners. The pilot was tested in one PoE in Tijuana-San Diego. Officially, the programme was established in several Ports of Entry in California and Texas. The objective of this fee-based SENTRI programme is to minimise northbound border delays for trusted travellers crossing this border. To be considered a low-risk traveller, CBP conducts a thorough revision of documentation requested to the applicant. The SENTRI approvals have to be renewed every two years and fees apply. The main three approvals by the programme are: i) approval of the driver, ii) approval of the people in the car and, iii) approval of the car that will be used for crossings. People can use an exclusive lane at the Port of Entry when the three approvals are granted. The waiting times when using the SENTRI lane should be considerably shorter as the majority of border crossers would not be approved for such programme. Nevertheless, waiting times also vary when using the SENTRI lane. The SENTRI programme is an economic mitigation strategy by the U.S.

The participants acknowledged during the interviews the benefits of the SENTRI programme rendering faster border crossings. Nevertheless, not all transborder pupils and students are enrolled nor eligible for SENTRI. Regardless of the exclusive lane for SENTRI holders, waiting time at the Port of Entry remains a crucial element of the daily academic dynamic.

As stated throughout this work, transborder learners participating in this research emphasised border crossings as the hardest part of the transborder practice. When unpacking this statement during the interviews, waiting time was the first element underscored. To explore the severity of time control at the PoEs in Calexico and San Diego, the participants were asked to roughly calculate the time they have spent in total waiting in line. The answers were astonishing.

The first thing observed is how surprised the participants were after the question. Most of them could not answer it with numbers. Only one person had tracked the time spent waiting to cross the border to Calexico: **Luis** shared:

El tiempo que yo he pasado ahí parado esperando cruzar es una cantidad estúpida de tiempo, fueron cuatro meses.

(The time that I spent there standing and waiting to cross is a stupid amount of time, there were four months.)

Aside from Luis, no other transborder participant kept record of the waiting times, regardless of this being the hardest aspect of the transborder practice. Such hardship of border time control can have a psychological effect as reflected in **Abraham's** answer:

Ni siquiera quiero pensar en eso, no quiero porque es tiempo que nadie me va a regresar entonces no vale la pena sacar esa cuenta.

(I do not even want to think about it, I do not want to because is time that I will not get back therefore is worthless to make that count.)

The negative connotation attached to waiting times was echoed by other participants. **Josemar** answered the question by saying:

Años de mi vida, fácilmente.

(Years of my life, easily.)

The time units to express the amount of time spent waiting to cross the border to the U.S. were either months or years. **Gustavo** even said that perhaps he waited two and a half lives already. Others estimated spending half of their lives standing in line to cross. Through these units of time (months, years, lives) transborder pupils and students perceived border elongation and compression, thickening the border.

However, the thickness of the border could be based on temporary subjectivities and the way time is experienced. **Mariana's** answer reflects such relativity:

Creo que he pasado como cinco años de mi vida haciendo fila, mínimo, puede que esté *way off, maybe*. Es que todo depende de con quién estés haciendo fila, si vienes platicando con tus amigos, no hay problema, depende de la persona con la que vas acompañada. Pero si vienes tu sola haciendo fila y te tocó esperar por cuatro horas, sí se me hace una eternidad. Sí espero cuatro horas, pero platicando con amigos pues se me hace más rápido.

(I believe that I have been waiting in line for five years, minimum, I can be *way off, maybe*. It all depends on who you are lining up with, if you are with your friends and chatting, there is no problem, depends on the person with you. But if you are by yourself waiting in line for four hours, it feels like an eternity. If I wait four hours but chatting with friends, it feels faster.)

Mariana's account also reflects the temporal dimension of border thickness based on time relativity and subjective perceptions. To cross the border faster would be the ideal scenario. In this context, transborder pupils and students developed and implemented mechanisms to cope with long waiting times when crossing the border. The following section analyses border hacks utilised to endure border waiting times, mechanisms of control, and the way meanings are added to the land Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego.

## VII. Border Hacks

Border hacks are resilient mechanisms developed by border crossers to cope with waiting times. Border hacks can go from crossing in groups to conducting certain activities while queuing. It is through border hacks that the spatial dimension of the border acquires more meanings, influencing the construction of transborder identities and subjectivities. The following paragraphs present the border hacks developed by the participants needed to endure daily border modes of control.

One border hack present in at least half of the narratives of those participants crossing by foot was to join a group of pupils already lining up. As a result, affective relationships started to develop among them. Those participants that implemented this border hack said they would interact more with peers while waiting in line than in schools. Friendships and relations were developed in such hard space. To feel accompanied and supported while queuing is an emotional border hack.

A different and common border hack was to eat breakfast. The land Ports of Entry in the Cali-Baja region have traditionally represented a commercial opportunity for local people offering all sorts of goods. For instance, a border crosser can order food or coffee without stepping out of the line. Other services found in PoEs are money exchange and Mexican souvenirs. In addition, to have breakfast on the line would give them more time to sleep at home. Moreover, this border hack gave the participants something to look forward to when reaching the Port of Entry.

A third common border hack was to do homework. The reasons for this hack were twofold: i) the participants would help each other with the homework as most parents could not mainly due to language barriers and, ii) sometimes the pupils were too tired to do homework after school. Moreover, the need of being productive during those hours of waiting was a common phrase when discussing border counter-pedagogies. The students that continued having a transborder life after university, kept using this border hack in their professional lives. For instance, the narrative of **Vannessa** shows the different ways she used waiting times in Tijuana since a child:

Muchas cosas pasaban dentro del carro. Estando ahí haces historias, te imaginas, ves lo cotidiano, pero de repente te haces fantasías en la cabeza de lo que está pasando, pero también de lo que podría pasar y quizás también lo que pasó en el pasado. Una memoria que tengo es sobre el *Toy of Trojan* por Erre, y recuerdo que era una pieza súper impactante para mí y para mi hermano, porque era como nuestras fantasías hechas realidad, concretado físicamente. ¡Wow! ¡Está una pieza de caballo aquí, de verdad, no la estamos imaginando! Porque la frontera es un espacio sumamente rígido, no es un espacio para niños, *is not friendly at all for anybody*. Y de repente, ver eso. Entonces utilizábamos mucha imaginación. Después

logré desarrollar la capacidad de escribir *papers* en mi mente y cuando llegaba a la escuela los escribía físicamente.

(Many things happened inside the car. You make stories, you imagined them, see the quotidian but all of the sudden you create your own fantasies in your head of what is happening but also of what could happen or what has already happened. One memory I have is about the Toy of Trojan by Erre and remembering being a very impactful piece for me and my brother, because it was like our fantasies made true, physically concretized. Wow! There is a horse piece actually here, we are not imagining it! Because the border is a very rigid space, is not a space for children, is not friendly at all for anybody. And all of the sudden to see that. So we used our imagination a lot. Afterwards I developed the ability to write papers in my mind and as soon as I got to school I wrote them down.)

All the aforementioned border hacks and experiences are an important part of the subjectivities and identities of the participants. Transborder pupils and students are aware of the politics of Ports of Entry and the exercise of power. Border hacks are a way of coping with such politics. In this sense, border waiting times can also be used for political purposes. Such is the case of **Alejandro** who developed a border hack using waiting times to be politically active. Alejandro is a binational transborder citizen standing against the border and the human rights violations by law enforcement officers:

El fin o lo que nosotros queremos es abolir la frontera. *We don't want it, we want the wall to go down and CBP to go away*, pero eso no va a pasar. Entonces lo que yo quiero hacer es tener una 'relación' con un CBP. Hago cosas para que sepan que estoy ahí. Yo tengo una troca anaranjada, viejita y tengo *stickers* que dicen *abolish ICE*. Últimamente pongo el *speech* de Martin Luther King en mi *bluetooth speaker* mientras espero cruzar la frontera y lo pongo en el techo *very loud* para que lo escuchen. No me han dicho nada, pero se acercan al carro con el perro y me revisan. Yo también aprovecho ese tiempo para llamar a mi representante y pedirle que se oponga a la construcción del muro. *If we want to abolish the border we have to use the border, to cross the border* para difundir información. *We have the privilege as transborder to see what is happening on both sides, to see the corruption of the border and to educate on both sides on how this needs to go away.*

(The objective or what we want is to abolish the border. We don't want it, we want the wall to go down and CBP to go away, but that will not happen. So what I want is to have a 'relationship' with a CBP. I do things to make them know I am there (waiting in the line). I have an old orange truck and I have *abolish ICE* stickers on it. Lately, I play a Martin Luther King speech in my Bluetooth speaker while waiting to cross the border and put it on the top of the truck so they

can listen to it. They have not said anything yet but they do come near my car with the dog and inspect it. I also use that time to call my state representative and demand him to oppose to the wall construction. If we want to abolish the border we have to use the border, to cross the border to disseminate information. We have the privilege as transborderers to see what is happening on both sides, to see the corruption of the border and to educate on both sides on how this needs to go away.)

Alejandro has a strong political identity and is aware of the hardship of the border. He uses the waiting time to oppose the existence of CBP and other border protection agencies. He critically understands that time management at the border is a political mechanism of control exercised on border crossers by the U.S. Overall, all border hacks are mechanisms of political resistance to endure the hardship of border time control. Through food, imagination, socialising, school activities and activism, transborder pupils and students try to transform the border crossing reality, by adding different meanings to the Port of Entry. As the hardest part of the transborder practice, to cross the border requires an incredible amount of adaptability and resilience that is palpable in their identities. This is also useful when navigating the second power structure they encounter daily, the U.S. education system.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

As established in the introduction of this chapter, it is essential to include the analysis of land Ports of Entry when discussing transborderism. The relevance of this site discussed throughout is based on the following: i) it is a site mostly overlooked in Mexico-U.S. border scholarship and a phenomenological approach contributes to its understanding, ii) it is one of the two main power structures transborder learners encounter and navigate daily, iii) counter-pedagogies were developed to help border crossers traverse this site, iv) it is the hardest part of being transborder due to the different types of violence and modes of control, v) as a result, border hacks are developed adding meaning to this space, and thus, influencing their transborder identity formation. This includes resilient mechanisms that would help them cope with their overall transborder dynamic. In this context, land Ports of Entry are a space of exception where anything can happen, mediated by U.S. CBP officers as the temporary sovereigns in a Schmittian (1997) sense. Such officers decide subjectively the admissibility to the U.S. under a national security narrative. However, CBP officers are biased subjects. The court resolution of *The United States vs. Brignoni-Ponce* case in 1975 stated that looking Mexican could be considered reasonable suspicion. This allows for random stops and searches in border areas. The number of deaths under U.S. CBP custody and the lack of accountability reflect the power this organisation holds. Northbound border crossings are mediated by such law enforcement by implementing a fear regime. The impactful narrative by Josemar reflects such norm. He was arrested while waiting in line based on racial profiling. He was punched and held at gunpoint by five U.S. CBP officers. The life story shared by Abraham reflects the terror



of crossing, the uncertainty of attending school in the U.S., and the importance of language. Abraham still struggles with the anxieties he developed as a transborder pupil in Mexicali-Calexico. The account of Sara portrays the level of fear felt making her develop coping mechanisms applied during her adult life. Anely also shared the nervousness she experienced before leaving the house each morning. The land Ports of Entry are non-places (Augé, M., 1995) controlled by U.S. CBP discretion particularly after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The narratives of the participants showed the effect of the 2001 terrorist attacks on border crossing dynamics. A 'new normal' was established at the border with harsher practices. For instance, U.S. officers asked more questions than usual at the checkpoint. The number of inspections and searches also increased. The account by Luis reflects the change of border crossing dynamic in Mexicali-Calexico during this period of time. Luis used to easily cross the border saying 'American citizen' at the checkpoint without showing a passport or visa. After 2001, he began having problems at the checkpoint due to the similarity of his name with a person with felony records in the U.S. After going through a specific additional process with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security years ago, he continues being stopped at the checkpoints and questioned about his identity. Moreover, the change on border waiting times became the factor that affected transborder learners the most. The participants in Mexicali-Calexico said prior 2001, the waiting time was of approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. Those located in Tijuana-San Diego reported waiting approximately thirty to forty minutes. After 2001, the participants in both cities reported a substantial increment of waiting times with a maximum of four hours. As a result, transborder pupils and students began to be late for school, affecting their student record and performance. For this reason, and through the mediation of schools on the border strip of California, the student lane was approved.

The student lane operates for a few hours during weekday mornings providing priority access to transborder learners attending U.S. private schools. The student lane benefited those crossing by foot reducing waiting times to twenty or thirty minutes on the Mexicali-Calexico border. However, the priority access angered the rest of border crossers enduring long waiting times as well. As a consequence, the transborder learners using the lane were victims of verbal violence. On one occasion, even physical violence. The experience of Arantxa gives account of the need of protection from other border crossers. Dominique highlighted she felt uncomfortable sensing the anger of the general crossers while using the lane. Violence is one of the characteristics of the land Ports of Entry at the Cali-Baja region.

Gender violence in the form of sexual harassment is also experienced by transborder girls and young women. The perpetrators of such acts are male U.S. CBP officers and general male border crossers. Female transborder participants in both cities reported having been made to feel uncomfortable by an officer when crossing the border. These participants also recounted being whistled at and receiving sexual comments from the male population at the Port of Entry while going to school. It is important to underscore that the female participants in this case were unaccompanied minors and only one was an adult at the time of the harassment. Gender violence has been historically present in the Mexico-U.S. border as the 'bath riots' discussed in a previous chapters

reflect.

Furthermore, time management is a different form of control in this border context for the effect it produces on documented border crossers. It is a U.S. state policy with the objective to deter as much as possible northbound crossings. All of the participants of this research said border waiting time was the most difficult part of being transborder. When asked for a rough estimation of the total amount of time spent in line, the units of measure were months, years, and lives. Luis calculated having waited a total of four months. Josemar said that easily half of his life. Abraham didn't want to think about it as such time will not be given back. Mariana said that time is relative depending on if crossing alone or accompanied by friends. Such relativity of time reflects the time and space dimension in this region with the capacity of compressing or elongating the border.

The use of technology compresses time and space by instantly rendering services or other benefits. The use of technology by the U.S. government at this border is substantial. The use of databases, biometrics, and surveillance, have the purpose of lowering the risk that northbound border crossers represent to the national security. However, the use of such technological resources does not reduce the border harsh practices nor waiting times elongating the border crossing, instead of compressing it. To cope daily with this dynamic, transborder pupils and students develop border hacks. The implementation of such resilient mechanisms helps them navigate the border. Some of the objectives of border hacks were to reduce waiting times, to make this space productive or to develop affective relationships. As a consequence, different meanings are attached to the Ports of Entry. Vanessa recalls using the border waiting time as a child to imagine fantastic things. As a student, she used the time to write academic papers in her mind, writing them down afterwards. Alejandro uses this waiting time to work towards the abolishment of ICE and U.S. CBP.

The land Ports of Entry in Cali-Baja region are complex and aggressive places that transborder learners transit daily. The different types of violence and mechanisms of control make the PoE the hardest part of the transborder practice. The adaptive capacities and resilience of transborder learners are developed mostly at this particular hostile space. In this sense, to understand the role of the PoE on transborder practices is paramount for a deeper analysis. As it has been established, transborder learners encounter two main structures of power, the land Port of Entry and the U.S. education system. Both structures highly influence their identity formation, school performances, life paradigms, and understandings of the region. Is in this sense that transborderism is the constant navigation across national and international power structures shaping transborder practices. Considering this context, the border hacks developed when crossing the Cali-Baja border helped the participants navigate the U.S. education system and school dynamics. These hacks or counter pedagogies empirically illustrate Valenzuela's Transborder Habitus (2014) that could only be understood from within. The following chapter addresses the challenges this population face inside the schools located in Calexico and San Diego. Official pedagogies disconnected from their sociopolitical reality and the counter-pedagogies to navigate the system are analysed.

## CHAPTER V

### AT SCHOOL

#### I. Introduction

Once entrance to Calexico is granted, transborder pupils walk out of the greyness of the Port of Entry building. The urban layout of the 'north' becomes more visible. The *burritos*, *tacos*, and *tortas* characteristic of the Mexican side of the border are replaced by donuts, coffee, shops, McDonalds, Jack in the Box, and Bank of America. Different headlines on newspapers in English, backpacks, and free coupon catalogues decorate the streets. At that moment, transborder pupils and students are part of the population of colour in U.S. communities. The school system positioned them as minority and subjects for acculturation. It is in this landscape that transborder learners begin the second part of the commute, by car, walking or using public transportation.

Classes in primary and secondary school usually start at 8 a.m. By that time, transborder learners already travelled from one country to another. Border protection and enforcement practices permeate the communities and are reproduced in local spaces. However, mechanisms of inclusion and affective relations are also developed. The contrasting practices are bodily experienced by this population throughout the day. In this sense, border practices of separation fail to be contained at the physical border and Ports of Entry. In this vein, some public and private schools located in Calexico and San Diego are sites where border enforcement practices are also experienced.

In this context, the U.S. education system is the second power structure transborder learners encounter and where counter-pedagogies are also developed. These types of pedagogies helped them navigate such a system that does not consider their unique dynamic. For instance, language surveillance, repercussions for being late or teacher-parent meetings only in English. These are some of the practices that do not reflect their transborder reality.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the PoEs and the border enforcement dynamics in such sites, are the first power structure transborder learners have to bodily navigate. Moreover, both power structures overlap multiple times, particularly visible when the student lane was established at the PoE, and when U.S. CBP officers go inside schools when searching for undocumented immigrants. In this border context, politics and education are entwined abiding top-bottom instructions limiting school districts to adapt to different contexts as observed in transnational education studies.

As accounted on the theoretical framework, transnationalism in education and transnational students have been the subject of interest for academia for the past decades (Poyago-Theotoky, J. and Tampieri, A., 2016, Flores, A., 2017, Geiger, A., 2017, Fry, R. and Gonzales, F., 2008, Hamann, E., Zúñiga, V., and García, J., 2008, Zúñiga, V., 2013). Hispanic pupils and students in the U.S. represent the 25.4% of all students in public education (Geiger, A., 2017, de la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018). Second Generation U.S. born Hispanic pupils and students makes up 52%. Approximately 70% of all Hispanic students (U.S or foreign born) do not speak English at home (Fry,

R. and Passe, J., 2009, de la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., & Esquinca, A., 2018). Education Next reported that 1.3 million pupils attending public schools in California are classified as English learners (Jacobs, J., 2019). As per Howard, E., Levine, T. and Moss, D. (2014). Additionally, 40% of pupils and students enrolled in a public school will speak a language other than English at home by the year 2030. It is in this sense that English language proficiency is of most importance in schools with substantial numbers of transnational learners.

Traditionally, transnational students have been considered low performers and underachievers in schools. Indeed, socioeconomically disadvantaged and racial/ethnic minority pupils navigate hostile education systems. Scholars in the field of education have struggled to understand below average standardised results from economically challenged students. Some of the answers point at communication deficiencies and deficit thinking.

Deficit thinking or the deficit model argues that student's low performance, language shortcomings, and other intellectual challenges are a reflection of internal cultural or economic deficits. The claims of this model date to the 1600s in the U.S. In 1971, such arguments were challenged by William Ryan in his work *Blaming the Victim* published in 1971 (Valencia, R. and Menchaca, M., 1997). Education policies were based on the deficit thinking model developed with the following methodology. First, social problems (of the victim) were identified. Then, the differences between the disadvantaged and advantaged were determined. The differences identified were considered the causes for the social problem. Lastly, governmental interventions had the objective of correcting such differences (Valencia, R., 1997).

The ideological model of deficit thinking established upon students of colour and enforced by policymakers and schools, prevented the community from questioning the learning environment and the shortcomings of teachers. School instructions and state policies reproduced the model in the U.S. that aimed for societal acculturation via forced assimilation. In this sense, English language was placed as a key element for acculturation that is still palpable in the context of the Cali-Baja region. To keep exploring the challenges these transborder learners face, the current chapter gives account of the school and local dynamics after the participants crossed the border. The objective is to demonstrate the way border enforcement practices, context disconnected pedagogies, and counter-pedagogies, are present inside schools in Calexico and San Diego. For such endeavour, the first section gives account of the interactions of the participants with the community on their way to school. The stories of the participants in Mexicali-Calexico illustrate experiences of surveillance and racism, but also of affection. At this stage, the liaison of U.S. CBP officers and school authorities is observed again. Then, the chapter follows the pupils to their schools. The resilience to cope with the structural adversities inside such institutions foster the development of in-school border hacks. For the case of private schools, language policies accompanied by punitive systems outweighed effective teaching-learning methods. At this border location, private schools have monetised with English language and the border asymmetry. This economic strategy of English-only policies, created a tense and sometimes hostile learning environment for the pupils.

The second section addresses the in-school border hacks or counter-pedagogies needed to navigate public schools. In comparison to those in private schools, transborder pupils attending U.S. public schools face different challenges related to enrolment requirements. The chapter then discusses the pedagogies exercised in border schools with respect to transborder learners. The sociocultural characteristics of this population call for the creation of epistemological spaces, adapted pedagogical practices, and revalorisation of biliteracy. Lastly, the chapter illustrates hard border enforcement dynamics experienced inside Calexico Mission School related to border protection. The stories give account of immigration persecution by U.S. CBP inside the school.

## II. From the PoE to School: La Primera (The 1st.) of Calexico

Most of the participants that walked along 1st. street in Calexico attended Calexico Mission School. The remnants of a once highly affluent street are visible in the now mostly deserted road. This private school is situated close to the Mexico-U.S. border. The school is visible from the Mexican side and Mexico is visible from the classroom windows. The PoE is less than 3 kilometres distance away making it possible for the pupils to walk to school. Traditionally, the pupils attending Calexico Mission School have been Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. With almost eighty years of existence, the school initially responded to the need of religious education of the Adventist children of the area (Calexico Mission School, 2019).

The walk from the PoE to the school includes different types of interactions. Shops are found along the way. Occasionally some of the participants stopped for breakfast at McDonalds or for a hot dog. Normally, the pupils used the walk to school to bond with friends as they walked in groups formed at the PoE. Additionally, some participants mentioned it was interesting to see people they would not normally see on the Mexican side like working immigrants heading to the fields. These former pupils were part of the A.M. societal landscape of this border town, not being welcomed by all community members.

**Aurora** recalls a lady in Calexico that would sit surrounded by palm trees on one parking lot on the 1st. street, and shouted racist comments to the pupils walking:

We would get 'you are Mexican, why are you on this side', and she chased us at times. Maybe she had mental health problems. She would say, 'you are Mexican, why are you getting school for free?'. She didn't see that it was a private school and that we were U.S. citizens. She took no prisoners, she chased my friend Carlos, and literally ran after him.

This type of community surveillance reflects some of the border enforcement and school district policies. School districts work in close liaison with local and federal authorities. The establishment of the student lane at the Port of Entry is one example of such entanglement. In some other cases, they collaborate regarding migratory surveillance. In the case of transborder pupils, such surveillance

includes the journey to the school once the border is crossed. For pupils attending public schools, crossing the border could potentially be considered as proof of not complying with residency requirements. The following experience exemplifies the statement:

During my high school years, I lived in Mexicali and studied one year in El Centro, California. This was until I was expelled because of an incident in which a police officer stopped the illegal taxi [*raiteros*] I was on, and contacted the school to report all of the students that were in the vehicle. I had residency in El Centro, California, but no inquiry was made. I returned to study in Mexicali and later on I decided to get a GED, and enter Imperial Valley College.

Border enforcement officers should not, in theory, be informing schools about migratory status nor mobility practices of the learners enrolled in such institutions. In practice, however, it happens. The complicity between authorities is also observed in the way transborder pupils in public schools are surveilled while crossing to Mexico after school. This will be discussed in a further chapter. Nevertheless, the adaptive and resilient capacities of this population observed at the Port of Entry also helped them navigate schools and the U.S. education system.

### **III. In-School Border Hacks**

Schools located at the Cali-Baja border stripe are sites where border struggles and education intersect. In this sense, the participants developed a specific set of mechanisms that I refer to as in-school border hacks. Such hacks are counter-pedagogies that responded to the political and pedagogical difficulties met at school by transborder learners.

In-school border hacks helped them navigate language policies, administrative processes, and institutional practices. Different in-school border hacks respond to different struggles. This is the case for public and private schools. However, such struggles can overlap in some cases. In the case of private schools, an analysis of the language policies and punitive mechanisms is presented. English-only oriented policies were not present in the accounts of the participants that attended public schools. In contrast, the challenges in public schools were related to the place of residency and transborder identity. The discussion of the latter will be presented further.

#### **III.I Private Schools: English or Nothing**

In 1849 the first Californian Constitution was ratified establishing that all state laws should be published in English and Spanish. Just a few years later it was modified to English-only state laws publications (Crawford, M., 1995). Similarly, the California Bureau of Public Instruction established the first English-only policy in public schools in 1855. Nevertheless, bilingual education remained in California while the new border and its dynamics synced (Schmid, C., 2001).

During the 20th century, English Proficiency policies and instructions in the state of California proliferated and transited through different approaches to bilingual education. A few examples of language instructions are: English as Second Language (ESL), Content-based ESL, Sheltered Instruction, Structured Instruction, Structured Immersion, Transitional Bilingual Education, Maintenance Bilingual Education, Two-Way or Dual-Immersion Programme (August, D. and Hakuta, K., 1997, Nailor, N., 2015), English-Only (Proposition 227) and Proposition 58 (Ulloa, J., 2016).

In 1998, Proposition 227 passed by the state government decreed English-only instructions unless parents requested native-language instructions for children through a signed waiver. In this case, pupils were allocated an English as a Second Language class with the objective to transition them to a Proficient English class as soon as possible (Jacobs, J., 2019, Ulloa, J., 2016). Schools located on the U.S. side of the border benefit financially from English-only and English as a Second Language policies. Parents' aspirational capital inherited by their children could be materialised through English language, as accounted in previous chapters. To speak English proficiently with a U.S. native-accent is considered to be a key element for accessing better jobs and life conditions. It is in this way that private schools in particular posit special interest in developing such language skills on transborder pupils. In some instances, the narratives of the participants showed inside school practices and instructions being more focused on English language skills than on learning processes or wellbeing.

Although language policies affect learners in public and private schools, punitive systems in relation to speaking English or Spanish were not observed in public education. In contrast, transborder pupils attending private schools in the U.S. did experience harsh practices related to English language from an early age. The following stories of three former transborder pupils in private schools give account of the pressure to transition to English-only instructions reinforced by punitive systems.

Such is the case of **Cecilia**. She studied at St. Mary's Catholic School located in El Centro, approximately twelve miles away from the West PoE in Calexico. She was enrolled in this school at age five to better her English language skills. Cecilia previously attended a private bilingual school in Mexicali. The children of a business partner of her father were enrolled at St. Mary's and recommended this institution to Cecilia's family. As we were sitting in a coffee place on the Mexican side, she remembered how difficult those first days of transition were:

Fue súper traumante, yo lloré a diario por los primeros dos meses, yo lloraba todos los días. Yo estaba acostumbrada en Mexicali a que me recogieran a medio día y estaba en mi casa más tiempo y allá nos íbamos súper temprano. Nos recogía el camión frente a Sam Ellis a las 7:15, hacíamos *carpool* entonces salíamos de la casa a las 6:30 a.m. y regresabas a las 4:00 pasadas de la tarde, y allá no hablaban español, y aunque yo sabía algo de inglés, era diferente. Diario lloraba que no quería ir a la escuela. Lo más difícil fue el shock del idioma y no conocer a nadie. A mí me frustraba mucho que no entendía lo que me estaban diciendo, trataba de pescar, pero no entendía absolutamente nada de lo que me decían. Mi maestra era

bilingüe y ella lo que hizo las primeras dos semanas me traducía, daba las instrucciones en inglés y luego me aclaraba algo en español. Después de las primeras dos semanas me dijo 'hasta aquí, no más español'. Y no podías hablar español para nada en la escuela, ni siquiera en el recreo. Te daban una '*written warning*' y a los tres eran *detention* y tenías que ir en la tarde o el sábado.

(It was super traumatic, I cried every day for the first two months. I cried every day. I was used to be picked up from school at noon in Mexicali and to be in my house for longer and to there [new school in the U.S.], we would go super early. We would take the school bus in front of Sam Ellis at 7:15 am. We did carpool so we would leave the house at 6:30 am and returned at 4:00 in the afternoon. And in there [new school] they didn't speak Spanish, and even though I knew some English, it was different. Every day I cried, I didn't want to go to school. The most difficult thing was the shock of the language and not knowing anyone. I was very frustrated not understanding what they were telling me, I tried to catch some words but I did not understand absolutely anything they were telling me. My teacher was bilingual and what she did for the first two weeks was to translate some things, she would give the instructions in English and then clarified them to me in Spanish. After the first two weeks she told me 'that is it, no more Spanish.' And you couldn't speak Spanish at all in school, not even during recess. They would give you a '*written warning*' and after three of those, you would go to detention during the afternoon or you would need to go to Saturday school.)

**Marisa** recalls the difficulties in her transition from Spanish to English school instructions and the overall hardship of being language surveilled inside her school. As we were sitting steps away from the train track that crosses from Mexico into the U.S., she shared she was born in Guadalajara but her parents were transferred to Mexicali three months after she was born. She was enrolled in Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy (OLGA), when she was five years old. Her sisters followed such trajectory. She studied at OLGA until the 8th grade:

Cuando estaba en tercero de kinder y le pregunté (a una maestra) algo en español porque apenas estaba aprendiendo inglés y me dijo '*excuse me, I don't understand! when you do not know what to say, you have to say, how do you say? then you say the word in Spanish and then I can answer*'. Ahí fue mi primer shock. Tenía cinco años. En la escuela estaba prohibido hablar en español. Si hablabas en español te daban *detention*, pero hablábamos en español, en el salón inglés totalmente, pero en el receso había algo que se llamaba *yard duties*. Esas personas lo que hacían era prácticamente cuidar que siempre hablaras en inglés, eran unas señoras de la escuela, pero no eran maestras, estaban específicamente para eso. Si estábamos sentadas, con mis seis amigas platicando en español, en cuanto una veía a una *yard duty* cambiábamos al inglés '*ohh and then*' y ya hablábamos en inglés y ellas no se daban



cuenta, pero así le hacíamos para poder hablar en español. Una vez le dije a mi amiga, 'Hey Marisa' (con acento en español) y me llamaron la atención porque no pronuncié su nombre en inglés. Eran muy estrictos.

(When I was in third grade of kindergarten, I asked her [a teacher] something in Spanish because I was just learning English and she said 'excuse me, I don't understand! when you do not know what to say, you have to say, how to do you say? then you say the word in Spanish and then I can answer'. That was my first shock. I was five years old. It was forbidden to speak in Spanish in the school. If you spoke in Spanish, they gave you detention, but we spoke in Spanish anyways. Inside the classroom we only spoke in English, but during recess there were 'yard duties' and those people what they did was practically make sure that we only spoke in English. They were school staff but not teachers, they were specifically hired for that. If we were sitting, me with my other six friends talking in Spanish, as soon as one of us would see a 'yard duty', we switched to English and say 'oh and then' and continued speaking in English. They did not realize we would do that but that is how we would speak in Spanish. Once I called my friend, 'Hey Marisa' (with a Mexican accent) and they called me out because I did not pronounce her name in English. They were very strict.)

Similar surveillance and punitive systems of both schools were identified in the narratives of former transborder pupils in San Diego. The participants believed such practices were harsh but normal as speaking English fluently was the objective of studying in the U.S. The methods for language enforcement varied some being less aggressive. In some cases, well-intended staff would help the pupils with some instructions.

**Arantxa** studied at Calexico Mission School and remembers her teacher being comprehensive with the pupils and their language transition. However, the punishments for speaking Spanish would force the students to speak only in English inside the school:

Los maestros sí tenían la atención si no les entendías, porque ellos se daban cuenta que no entendías. Pero si hablabas español te daban un punto malo y si tenías tres puntos malos ya te daban *detention* o te mandaban a *Sunday school*. Teníamos unas computadoras para buscar palabras y diccionarios entonces no había más que utilizar esas herramientas para que no te mandaran a *detention*.

(The teachers were attentive if you did not understand them because they were able to tell if you did not. But if you spoke Spanish, they would give you a 'bad point' and if you had three 'bad points' they would give you detention or send you to Sunday school. We had some computers for word searching and dictionaries, so there was nothing more you could do but to use those tools so they wouldn't send you to detention.)

A participant shared that her daughter got in trouble for speaking Spanish in Calexico Mission School. The pupil was reminded by a school staff that her parents were paying for her to speak English. However, English is the pupil's first language and Spanish the second one. The zero-tolerance language policy in this school was against speaking Spanish in general, applied to English native speakers as well. In this sense, the English-only school policy became a discriminatory practice reinforced by punitive systems but disguised as a method to develop English language skills. The biliteracy and bilingual skills that would contribute to the learning process of transborder pupils were completely undermined by these schools.

For such reasons, the participants used different mechanisms to cope with the language barriers during learning processes. The majority of the participants in private schools said that peer mentoring was essential. The punitive mechanisms would prevent the pupil from speaking to teachers to a certain extent. Instead, they brought the questions to peers and friends. The initial learning process and transition was done mostly through peer-peer dynamics.

The second mechanism to improve language skills was the use of physical or online dictionaries. It was also linked to not receiving help with their homework from parents or teachers. Both in-school hacks contributed to the navigational and linguistic capital of these participants, based on peer support and guidance.

In this context, the English-only policies and language surveillance are mechanisms of border reinforcement, in some private schools in Calexico and San Diego. Moreover, to speak Spanish was a reason for reprimands. Biliteracy and bilingualism were not considered an asset for the learning process but rather a cultural liability inherently present in the border context. Although English as a Second Language programmes in such schools have a more nuanced approach to English learning, they do not foster bilingualism. As stated previously, the objective of ESL is to transition pupils to English-only instructions as soon as possible. Such language policies are disconnected from the local reality of the border and transborder pupils. It is 'English or nothing' as a participant said.

In contrast, English-only policies were not present in the narratives of those participants that attended public schools. One participant said that once in a while the teacher would request the pupil to speak in English. Moreover, no language surveillance or punitive systems were implemented in these settings. However, they had to navigate a school system hiding their place of residency and life conditions which are presented in the following section.

### III.II Public School: Hidden Transborder Practices

The most difficult challenge for transborder pupils in public schools located in Calexico or San Diego, is to not disclose their place of residency or transborder practice. This is instructed by the parents from a young age and held for as long as necessary. As stated previously, U.S. school

districts require proof of residency to grant access to schools located in the area. The process to enrol a pupil in a different school district requires an administrative procedure and a monthly fee hard to meet for most parents. The consequences of providing false documentation range from a fee penalisation to parent imprisonment. One mechanism used to comply with the residency requirement is to provide a legal document from a house located in the area, such as a utility bill. Access to such a bill would be granted by a relative, family friend, or a person that would 'rent' the bill. In this context, school districts via teachers or staff try to verify that all pupils enrolled meet the requirements.

School districts make 'reasonable efforts' to determine the compliance of residency requirements. Such efforts go from surveillance at the Port of Entry and asking questions to the pupils about the house and neighbourhood they live in. Transborder pupils from a very young age are aware of the school entry requirement and the consequences of non-compliance. In this sense, the participants had to lie about their life to school friends and teachers for years. Hiding the transborder practice can have several repercussions in the social life and personal development as they receive limited support. The previous section also underscored the importance of peer support on the Port of Entry and in school. However, transborder pupils in public school do not hold such a support system. For instance, one participant living in Mexicali, but attending school in Calexico, remembered the difficulty as a child to cope with a pretended identity in front of teachers and friends at school. The mother of one of her friends always offered to drive her home. The temperature in Mexicali-Calexico can rise above fifty degrees Celsius during the summer and below zero during the winter. To not raise any suspicions, the participant was driven to a house in Calexico where she supposedly lived. Afterwards, the participant would walk a longer distance to the PoE and cross to Mexicali. She managed to perform this dynamic for several years in primary school.

**Alejandro** shared a similar situation from a very young age:

Mis amigos aquí (EE.UU.) no sabían que vivía en Tijuana. No les podía decir que vivía en Tijuana y yo me acuerdo siempre mi mamá diciéndome que no les podía decir dónde vives 'ni a los maestros ni a tus amigos'.

(My friends here (U.S.) did not know that I lived in Tijuana. I could not tell them that I lived in Tijuana and I always remembered my mother telling me that I could not tell them where I live 'neither to the teachers nor to your friends'.)

Alejandro hid part of his identity and practice like many transborder pupils in this situation. The pupils developed a dual identity or persona as a coping mechanism. This type of performance became easier with time and practice. The parents had an important role in the developing of this border hack since the pupils could be expelled or the parents could face legal consequences. Such is a high responsibility placed on the pupils at a young age. Moreover, the school surveillance to detect

possible fraudulent enrolments was conducted in a hard manner on the pupils. The case of Sheila's daughter shows one way it is done. Once, Sheila's daughter was asked why she was late and she responded that the train made her late for school. This raised some alarms since the train in Calexico passes through a different school district. Sheila received a call and held a meeting with the principal demanding to see additional residency documentation. After this incident, Sheila had to remind her daughter to: 'never speak to anyone about where you live nor why you are late, if they ask you questions, tell them 'ask my mom' and that is it'. Sheila also said to have taught her daughter what she was taught as a transborder pupil herself, 'do not speak of where you live'. Her daughter now reproduces Sheila's in-school border hack to prevent being expelled.

Based on the above narratives, two types of in-school border hacks were developed. One relates to the performativity based on the concealment of the pupil's place of residency. The pupils then needed to fill those gaps of information with alternative facts about themselves, inevitably creating a persona just for school. The second type is related to traversing the U.S. public school system with limited peer support on the Mexican side of the border. Moreover, the participants had to rely on school friends to resolve doubts about the homework and school administrative process without raising any suspicions. The participants in this category also shared having a reduced number of friends in school and almost none on the Mexican side. The surveillance practices were not limited to inside school but were also conducted at the Port of Entry to record those crossing back to Mexico after school. The reduced number of friends and being followed to the Port of Entry will be discussed in the following chapter analysing after school practices.

Language and residency policies are border enforcement practices experienced in schools related to transborder dynamics. However, teaching and learning pedagogies were not connected to the local reality either. As commented previously, biliteracy and bilingualism were not normally encouraged inside U.S. schools located at the Cali-Baja region. Nevertheless, there are some examples in which well-intended educators exercised pedagogical practices that fostered multiple connections. Moreover, California recently developed biliteracy programmes as an effort to reshape the future of the state as the following section discusses.

#### **IV.(Dis) Connecting with *El Otro Lado* (the other side)**

Transborder pupils and students transit from physical to symbolic borders with limited visibility and negotiated presence. For instance, pupils crossing with uniforms are acknowledged by U.S. authorities through the establishment of the student lane at the Ports of Entry. The recognition of the transborder figure temporality assists them during commuting northbound. Once the pupils get to the classrooms, the visibility and acknowledgement as transborder members of border communities start degrading.

As transnational learners and as part of a national, not local, minority, the pedagogies and school dynamics do not necessarily consider the specificities of this demographic group. As presented in a previous chapter, transnational education and student performance have been of

interest for scholars looking at this correlation (Geiger, A., 2017, Flores, A., 2017, Zúñiga, V. and Hamman, E., García, J., 2008, Boske, C. and McCormack, S., 2011). Such scholarship has suggested a framework for the development of pedagogies to bridge the Mexico-US border by transnational learners.

Victor Zúñiga and Edmund T. Hamann in 'Sojourners in Mexico with U.S. School Experience' (2009) asserted that schools have traditionally served as mediators between the pupils and communities from local to national levels. Such mediation is conducted in two coexisting levels: common schooling script and fragmented schooling script. The common schooling script refers to the curricula aiming to prepare pupils or students to become citizens with a sense of belonging and loyalty to the host country. The fragmented schooling script responds to modern economy demands in relation to labour (McAndrew, M. 2007, Zúñiga V. and Hamann, E., 2009). Nevertheless, this academic mediation responds to national demands without considering transborder sociocultural assets of the learners, nor the economic dynamics of the region.

Additional efforts have been made by scholars, educators, and authorities to adapt the school curricula by developing pedagogies reflecting diverse sociocultural contexts. Such is the case of border pedagogy defined as 'a complex and interactive set of instructional practices, curriculums, and knowledge bases that educators need to incorporate in order to be more effective with transnational students at the borderlands' (Rosales, A., 2007:59). This definition draws on the work of Henry Giroux 'Border Pedagogy as Postmodernist Resistance' (1991). Giroux's interest relied on the formation of critical citizens that could engage with the opportunities and limitations of sociocultural formation. In Giroux's words:

'Within this disclosure, students engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders... These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that serve to either limit or enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into borders of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize then become destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps' (Giroux, H.,1991:3).

The critical approach to pedagogy by Giroux and Rosales recognised the epistemological spaces that transnational and transborder learners can create. Such opportunity should be acknowledged by at least border educators. Remapping and debordering literacies should be of interest for the school and local community. The efforts made to this regard inside the classrooms rely mostly on language and English as a Second Language model. Nevertheless, there are some examples of teacher practices that are directed to pupils that move intensively through the Mexico-U.S. border. Maria Teresa de la Piedra, Blanca Araujo and Alberto Esquinca presented the case of Ms. O in *Educating Across Borders* (2018). This book is the product of three years of ethnographic work at

Border Elementary School and its Dual Language program. The school is located in El Paso, Texas and it was chosen due to the amount of transborder pupils that attend there.

Ms. O encouraged the students to make connections between the activities in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez during the learning process. The examples and assignments used in her classroom, using texts from both sides of the border, triggered processes of recontextualisation, translation and community connection. Making connections is a type of pedagogical practice that valorises the transborder dynamic of the students in two ways: i) by acknowledging the pupils' daily journey between communities, and ii) including materials (texts and media) that the pupil is in contact with on the Mexican side (de la Piedra, M., Araujo, B., Esquinca, A., 2018).

In contrast, the participants of this research could not remember being encouraged to create connections nor using examples from Mexico. Those participants that attended public schools said Spanish was tolerated but no local connection was fostered inside the schools. **Arantxa** was the only participant that remembered experiencing making connections and using Mexican texts in one of the classes in Calexico Mission School:

La maestra de historia era muy buena maestra y sabía explicar muchísimo las cosas. Nos hacía hacer *reports* semanales, escritos en donde teníamos que leer periódicos de aquí y de allá, y teníamos que hacer un resumen de lo que estaba pasando en general. Recuerdo que nos tocó la elección de Obama y todo ese boom y nos explicaba mucho de los beneficios para nosotros como mexicanos y para ellos como estadounidenses. Ella partía en dos e incluía lo que ella sabía de México, 'ellos lo pintan así porque ganaron, pero México también hizo eso'.

(The history teacher was very good and knew how to explain things. We made weekly written reports where we had to read newspapers from here (U.S.) and there (Mexico), and we had to make a summary of what was going on in general. I remember that Obama's election happened during that time and all that boom, and she explained a lot the benefits for us as Mexicans and for them as Americans. She split into two [the explanation of history] and included what she knew about Mexico and would say, 'they (U.S.) paint it that way because they won but Mexico also did this'.)

This experience inside the classroom and learning process helped Arantxa be involved with history and current affairs on both sides of the border. By including historical facts from Mexico, connections and recontextualisations were fostered by the teacher. Moreover, biliteracy was also fostered and valued with such practices. To read, write, and speak proficiently in two or more languages has proven to have cognitive, academic, social, and economic benefits. In 2012 the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) was created per the Assembly Bill 815 and amended in 2017. SSB is an initiative of Californians Together which is a coalition of different members of the education community interested in equitable education policy (Californians Together, 2019).

SSB consist of a Diploma distinction given to public high school students that are proficient in two or more languages. The Seal benefits the student and the state education system at different levels:

i) it emphasises the value of different languages and texts creating a more inclusive system honouring the diversity of cultures, maintaining the connections with home communities, ii) it supports cognitive benefits such as retaining and manipulating larger and more varied pieces of information, iii) employers would recognize the biliteracy skills that respond to economic demands of the region and, iv) the state overall will have better and more prepared future leaders and workers (Californians Together,2019).

So far, three hundred and twenty-one (76%) school districts in California offer the SBS to high school graduates. In the case of San Diego, eighty-two schools located in nineteen districts participate in the initiative. The Sweetwater Union High School District, which is the closest to the Tijuana-San Diego border is included. However, Calexico Unified School District does not offer SSB (Californians Together, 2019).

Based on the participants' experiences, transborder pedagogy or bridging practices like making connections exhorted by Ms. O, were not common in schools along this border stripe. The participants hold the conditions to become biliterate, but such trait was not considered in the schools, especially in private schools. Those efforts are left to educators recognising the value of multiple learning paths and new epistemological spaces, fostering the immersion of the pupils in multiple communities.

The State Seal of Biliteracy is a good initiative to remap the characteristics of California's pupils and students that respond to the needs of this border region. As more public schools adopt biliteracy practices perhaps private schools will align and develop such competitive skills as well. Part of the challenge is informing and convincing parents and educators of the importance of biliteracy since parents expect the school to focus on English proficiency, despite the deficiencies in the overall learning.

However, language policies or (dis)connecting practices are not the only border related dynamics present in schools. Hard border or border reinforcement practices were common events to witness by a group of participants in a Calexico private school. The persecution of immigrants by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers is one example. The following section addresses such a practice.

## **V. Border Enforcement Practices in School**

In the case of transborder pupils and students, border enforcement practices are observed commonly during the school trajectory. Such dynamics are related to border struggles and protection conducted by U.S. CBP officers. The experiences of the participants vary from case to case and from school to school. However, the narratives of the participants that attended Calexico Mission School show the presence of border enforcement practices inside the school, and how it is normalised.

As stated previously, Calexico Mission School is situated next to the border in Mexicali-Calexico. The pupils in this school are able to see the border fence from the classroom window. It is not unusual for border people to see undocumented immigrants jumping the fence to the U.S. or being detained by U.S. CBP officers. The peculiarity about Mission School is that it became a border site. *Polleros*<sup>9</sup> and undocumented border crossers saw an opportunity on the school's location.

Some of the schemes to cross undocumented people or illegal drugs took advantage of the urban layout affecting this school. The following stories give account of the way pupils experienced hard border protection practices during classes or breaks.

**Sheila** remembers that it was usual and common to witness border related situations:

Una vez aventaron pelotas con droga de la línea a la escuela y alguien los tenía que agarrar adentro de la escuela. Me tocó mirar a los que se cruzan, escondidos abajo de los carros, en el bote de basura, era bien normal mirarlos, no nos daban miedo ni nada. Nos empezó a dar miedo cuando contrataron *security* y ellos nos decían, '¿en dónde están? ustedes los miraron'. Pero nosotros no decíamos nada, hacíamos como que no los vimos, nadie vio nada. Estaban muy fanatizados por agarrar personas. Cuando entraban los *CBPs*, los *border patrols*, a los pasillos, a las canchas y al estacionamiento, los mirábamos como si nada. Esto pasaba a la semana cinco veces y al día dos veces. Lo mirábamos normal.

(Once a ball filled with drugs was thrown from the line [the border] to the school yard, someone was supposed to pick it up. I saw people that crossed [the border] hidden under the cars, inside the rubbish bins, it was very normal to see them, we [pupils] were not afraid of them or anything. We started to be scared when they [the school] hired private security and they used to ask us 'where are they [undocumented immigrants]? you saw them'. But we didn't say anything. We pretended we didn't see them, nobody saw anything. They were very fanatical about arresting people. U.S. CBPs entered [the school] looking [for undocumented immigrants) on the halls, the basketball court and at the parking lot, we used to see them like nothing was happening. This would happen five times a week and two times a day. It was very normal.)

Sheila's story shows that for a period of time, twice a day pupils witnessed CBP officers chasing people inside the school. Such is a place supposed to be exclusively for learning purposes. In this context, it also serves as a place where certain border related dynamics are reproduced. Not only undocumented migration is observed but also drug trafficking.

**Mariana**, also studied in Calexico Mission School and remembers how quotidian these situations were, and the role the school and uniforms played:

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<sup>9</sup> People that help undocumented immigrants to cross the border for a price.



Siempre nos tocó ver eso, a mí no se me hacía raro porque como desde chiquita estuve en la *Mission*, la escuela está muy cerca de la línea mucha gente se cruzaba y se escondía abajo de los *trailers* que eran los salones y entraban los de la *Border Patrol* buscando al que se cruzó y todos sabíamos que 'no te metas ni ayudes al que se cruzó ni al de la *Border Patrol*'. Yo nunca me metí en eso, pero había una muchacha en el nueve como de quince o dieciseis años, ella era *pollera*. Entonces compraba los uniformes en la Sam Ellis y ella le daba los uniformes a la gente que quería cruzar, entonces ya ellos se cruzaban, se quitaban lo que traían encima. Sí me tocó verlo, y se quedaban con el uniforme de la *Mission*, y entraban a la escuela. Se quitaban la camiseta y el pantalón en chinga, lo aventaban ahí y se metían y hacían *mingle* entre nosotros. Normalmente se cruzaban cuando era *recess* o *lunch*, se cruzaban cuando estábamos todos afuera, no se cruzaban cuando estábamos todos en clase. Imagínate estábamos todos en lonche, todos los de la secundaria y prepa, fulanito se cruza el cerco, se quita todo lo que trae encima y el de la *Border* no se va a detener a preguntar a la oficina si podía entrar entonces se metía también. Una vez mi profesor de matemáticas le metió el pie al que se había cruzado obviamente para que lo detuviera el de la *Border Patrol*. Después entrábamos a clases como si nunca hubiera pasado.

(I always saw that [undocumented immigrants jumping the fence], I did not find it strange because I have always been to Mission since a young age, the school is very close to the line [border line]. Many people crossed [illegally] and hid below the trailers that were our classrooms, and the Border Patrol would enter looking for that person and everybody knew that we should 'stay away from it, do not help the one who crossed nor the Border Patrol'. I never got involved in those situations. But there was a girl on the 9th grade, we were maybe fifteen or sixteen years old, and she was a *pollera*. She would buy the school uniforms at SamEllis and gave them to the people who wanted to cross [illegally]. As soon as they crossed, they would take off what they were wearing, tossed it wherever, put on the uniform of Mission school, and entered the school. They took off the t-shirts and trousers very fast and mingled with us. They usually crossed during recess or lunch time, they crossed when we [pupils] were all outside, they didn't cross when we were in classes. Imagine this, we were all out during lunch time, someone crosses the border, takes off everything he had on, and the Border Patrol officer is not going to stop and ask the school officers if they could enter. Once, my math teacher made the person who was chased by the Border officers trip with his foot. After that we would continue with our classes as if nothing happened.)

It is important to underscore that not all of the participants that attended Calexico Mission School expressed witnessing similar experiences. This is due to the different times the participants attended the school. However, both stories coincide with the effects of the establishment of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. Definitely one of the long-standing effects was the normalisation of daily

violence and migration persecution. Fortunately, nothing lethal has happened inside Calexico Mission School but the potential risk exists if these practices continue. Such hard border protection dynamics are a constant reminder of the participant's privilege for having a lawful document to cross the border, and of the sacrifices people make for the American dream.

The border enforcement dynamics inside Mission School also reflect the liaison between school authorities and migration law enforcers. It is visible through the surveillance pupils experience when crossing the border and commuting to school. It is also visible inside this academic institution and continues to be present in the journey back to the border as it will be presented in the following chapter. The border practices of surveillance and persecution absorbed some schools located in the Cali-Baja border into its regime.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The chapter analysed the third instalment of the daily journey of transborder pupils and students, and the way border enforcement practices are present during the commute and inside the school. As soon as the participants crossed the border they entered into a different world, one that is familiar but different in many ways. The commute to school takes place in a mixed sociocultural landscape. In the case of former transborder pupils at the Mexicali-Calexico border, the commute had positive and negative aspects. Relations of affection helped the participants navigate the 1st. street that sometimes had community members shouting racist words and even chasing them, as Aurora's story shows. This type of discrimination and racism is also reflected in the deficit thinking model of the U.S. This model based pedagogical practices and policies on the notion of inherited deficiency of students of colour. In other words, the model states that the cultural or societal practices of pupils or students of colour are deficient and reflected in low school performances.

Heavy surveillance is another practice the participants endured daily. An evident liaison between immigration law enforcers and education authorities in persecuting 'unlawful pupils and immigrants' is observed. The story of a former transborder pupil reflects such partnership when expelled as the illegal taxi he was on was stopped. The officer called the public school and gave the names of the learners on the taxi assuming they all lived on the Mexican side, without conducting further inquiry. To cope with the hardship of the relation of the U.S. academic system and border enforcement practices, the participants developed in-school border hacks or practical counter-pedagogies. Just as the border hacks they used while waiting to cross the border, in-school border hacks helped to navigate the education system policies. In the case of private schools, the surveillance is experienced via English-only instructions. In-school border hacks in private schools were mostly directed to endure such language policies. The pressure on the pupils to speak just in English regardless of the age can be detrimental. The accounts of Cecilia, Marissa and Arantxa show different language surveillance mechanisms, punitive systems, and forced language transition strategies.

In the case of the participants that attended public schools, in-school border hacks were directed to not disclose their place of residency. School districts are entitled to conduct 'reasonable efforts' to assure the validity of proof of residency presented by the pupil. For this reason, transborder pupils performed an identity compliant with the school enrolment requirements. The story of Alejandro shows the way he hid part of his identity from schoolteachers and friends. Another participant shared how she lied to her friend's mother and ended up walking longer distances as a result. The narrative of Sheila shows the way her daughter was questioned when she made a comment related to a train. Sheila then instructed her daughter to hide the true place of residency, reproducing an in-school border hack she used as a pupil.

The presented narratives show the disconnection of border schools' practices and the local sociocultural reality. Moreover, such disconnection is observed on the teaching methods that do not encourage pupils to make connections with both border communities. In this sense, a border pedagogy that integrates transborder practices is necessary for the betterment of the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, such innovative pedagogy would have epistemological implications for the understanding of the region. The case of Ms. O at a border Elementary School in El Paso shows a pedagogy based on community connections and bridging knowledge. Regarding the Cali-Baja region, Arantxa's account was the only one that reflected a similar bridged practice by a history teacher. A transborder pedagogy should be emancipatory to break with the ongoing disempowerment practices towards transborder pupils and students. Biliteracy and bilingualism are two elements that should be included in the development of transborder teaching and learning practices.

Since 2008, the state of California has made an important effort towards institutionalised biliteracy. That is to speak, write, and read proficiently in two or more languages. With the creation of the State Seal of Biliteracy (SBB), the state and education authorities aimed to emphasise the value of bilingualism reflecting the diversity cultural community in California. Biliteracy also has cognitive and economic benefits. The SSB responds to the 21 century reality of learners and employers in California. However, not all of the schools at the Cali-Baja region are part of the programme.

While the SSB is an effort to bridge communities in the state of California, there are still hard border enforcement practices conducted inside some of the schools. Such is the peculiar case of Calexico Mission School located right at the border of Mexicali-Calexico. *Polleros*, drug smugglers and undocumented immigrants take advantage of this school and developed border crossing methods based on its location. The account of Mariana showed that a student fellow was a *Pollera* and used the school uniforms as a camouflage mechanism. The migrant would put on the uniform and mingle with the students during lunch time after jumping the border fence. The narrative of Sheila showed the way the school was used to smuggle drugs when balls full of drugs were thrown from the Mexican side onto the school yard. Both narratives included persecutions conducted by the CBP officers interrupting the school and classrooms. To such events the pupils remained quiet. To not speak about it was the way the participants stayed on the margin of such border struggle.

Overall the experiences at this stage of the transborder journey show the multiplication of border dynamics inside the schools located at the Cali-Baja region. This is based on the English-only policies, residency surveillance, U.S. CBP persecutions, or limited visibility on the pedagogical methods. The liaison between education authorities and U.S. CBP is evident with a shared interest to protect the country rather than protecting the pupils. In this sense, the peculiar transborder school dynamic exists in continuum with the border, including the period after school. The purpose of the following chapter is to explore after school dynamics and challenges related to transborder learners in the Cali-Baja region.

### BACK TO THE FAMILY HOME

#### I. Introduction

The bell rings and school is over for the day. For many pupils and students in traditional school dynamics this is one of the best moments of the day. They finally get to go home, have lunch, see friends, play some sports, and do homework as well. This might not be the case for all transborder learners.

The objective of this chapter is to better understand the transborder dynamic of these learners when crossing southbound, to determine the school related challenges faced after school and overall, to reflect on their transborder day, including the sites they visited and the power structures transited. Such discussion will contribute to further understanding the implications of transborder practices in relation to education, and will build consistency on the transborder learner figure. For this purpose, the chapter is based on former transborder pupils' accounts discussing after school activities and dynamics.

The following sections will first present the segment from the school to the Ports of Entry and the variety of interactions with the community. The extension of school surveillance in the case of the pupils in public schools of Calexico is also discussed. Based on the participant's perceptions, the chapter then presents the process of southbound border crossing. The chapter continues analysing after school activities and the importance of having fair access to programmes funded by the California Department of Education. Such programmes have the objective to help pupils develop literacy and social skills. These two aspects are very important for transborder pupils, especially with regards to homework and limited parental support. The role of parental involvement with the pupils' education is then discussed underscoring the language barrier affecting school-parent communication. In the last section of the chapter, an account of the latest policies in education related to parent involvement is discussed. Lastly, a brief reflection on the end of a transborder day is presented as a concluding exercise of the empirical data gathered for this research.

#### II. From the School to the Port of Entry

It is not uncommon for students all around the world to walk home or to use public transportation after school. While such practice can represent a challenge in itself, in the case of transborder learners this also means crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, again. They have to transit the city back to the Port of Entry. For those walking from Calexico's schools, Mexicali meant going through *La Primera* where the racist lady sat surrounded by palm trees. However, a different set of challenges were experienced after school.

In the case of Calexico-Mexicali pupils, it is important to remember the extreme weather of these cities. Mexicali is considered the city with the highest temperature in Mexico, experiencing fifty-six degrees Celsius during the summer (Molina, O., 2014). From April to September, the temperature rises considerably (INEGI, 2019). Worldwide, it is considered one of the ten cities with the highest temperatures, along with Cairo in Egypt and Jazan in Saudi Arabia. Temperatures above forty degrees Celsius can cause health problems such as dehydration and respiratory illness (Milenio, 2019). Without a doubt the weather conditions do represent an external element that negatively affects the pupils when walking to the Port of Entry under the sun. For this reason, the participants expressed looking for refuge, particularly in friendly stores like Sam Ellis which was mentioned often in their narratives.

Sam Ellis is a family departmental store situated on the 1<sup>st</sup>. street of Calexico. The store was established in 1915 and is considered almost an institution in Calexico. I remember going to this store with my grandparents and parents. The same memory is shared by most of the people that grew up crossing the border. Before big store chains made it to Calexico during the following decades, Sam Ellis was the only 'big store' strategically on the 1<sup>st</sup>. street.

When asking the participants about their journey from the school to Calexico's Port of Entry, 100% mentioned Sam Ellis store. Mr. Sam Ellis and his son, Mr. Richard Ellis, were very empathic with transborder pupils helping them especially during the summer. An example of Mr. Ellis' kind character is shared by **Aurora**:

His sisters were not very nice but he [Mr. Ellis] was. He now may rest in peace. They [the sisters] were more like *'ugh these are students coming from Mexicali'* because we would hear them sometimes. But Mr. Ellis was very kind specially when it was hot. He would say *'Come on kids, come on in, drink some water and wait, go look around the store and cool off, use the restrooms and the water fountains'* and he would always buy chocolates from us [those the school made the students sell]. He would buy the whole box! He said *'they are gonna melt'*. He was awesome, very awesome. That would be our pit stop before crossing back to Mexico.

It is not unusual for transborder pupils and students to make such 'pit stops' on the way back to Mexico. In some cases, pupils would not even cross the border immediately after school. As stated previously in this work, sometimes entire families were transborder meaning that all the members conducted activities on both sides. Such was the case of **Vannessa** remembering the long hours spent in the U.S. after school.

Tenía jornadas laborales y de escuela de dieciséis horas. Mi papá nos recogía (de la escuela) y dejábamos a mi mamá en su escuela, estaba estudiando *law school* en U.S., y mi hermano y yo nos quedábamos toda la tarde en la biblioteca de *law school* o en el carro donde también dormíamos y comíamos. Mi mamá salía a las diez de la noche y a esa hora regresábamos a

Tijuana a dormir, y al siguiente día volvíamos a hacer esa rutina, día tras día. Es muy similar a las personas viviendo *homelessness*, no tienen una *add*, pero ahí están, en los carros y las bibliotecas y es muy similar a mi experiencia y a la de muchos estudiantes transfronterizos *suffering food and housing insecurities*.

(I had sixteen hours shifts of work and school. My dad picked us up [from school] and then we would drop my mother to her school, she was studying law school in the U.S., and my brother and I stayed all afternoon in the law school's library, or in the car where we also slept and ate. My mother would finish school at ten at night and then we would return to Tijuana just to sleep. And the next day we would repeat that routine, day after day. It was very similar to people living homelessness, they do not have an add but there they are, in cars and libraries and it is very similar to my experience and that of many transborder students suffering food and housing insecurities.)

Food and housing insecurities are important concerns faced by a subgroup of transborder pupils and students. It is interesting that the participant used the word *homelessness* to describe certain circumstances during her upbringing. This feeling was shared by other participants in San Diego when describing the small amount of time spent in their houses. School related activities such as homework were done in other spaces like in the car. In this sense, it is important to rethink notions of vulnerability and homelessness in relation to transborder learners in the border context. Furthermore, such insecurities have health implications for this population regardless of having a house on the other side of the border. Either by doing 'pit stops' in shops or spending the afternoon in a car or public spaces, these learners had to continuously adapt to the challenges of transborder lifestyles. This is also the case for some pupils attending public schools that kept experiencing surveillance on the way back to Mexico.

As accounted and discussed in the previous chapter, there is a liaison between border law enforcement and education authorities. This is also evident when the school district surveillance is conducted at the Port of Entry on the U.S. side. Normally it is not allowed to stand and take notes on the people crossing the border. U.S. CBP is the highest authority at the PoE when crossing northbound and before crossing southbound. In contrast, the Mexican authorities are present once border crossers are on the Mexican side.

**Linda** attended a private school in Calexico but had a few transborder friends enrolled in public schools. She remembers comparing experiences of crossing back to Mexicali and shared:

Es muy difícil para ellos cruzar de regreso a Mexicali porque también los vigilan. Personas de la escuela van al cruce a la hora de salida para tomar nota de los estudiantes que cruzan a Mexicali. Entonces lo que hacen (los estudiantes) es que, si alguien de los alumnos se da

cuenta, avisa a los demás y ellos se quedan por las primeras calles, en las tiendas, esperando a que esa persona se vaya para entonces podres cruzar de regreso a su casa.

(It is very difficult for them to cross back to Mexicali because they are also being watched. School faculty go to the crossing port afterschool and take note of the students crossing to Mexicali. So what they [the students] do is that if any of them realizes someone from school is there, warns the others and they wait around the nearby streets, in the stores, just waiting for that person to leave so they can cross back home.)

However, not all transborder pupils and students in U.S. public schools would experience the same practice from education authorities. In fact, such practice appears to be only perceived in Mexicali and Calexico. All of the participants under the same condition in Tijuana and San Diego said they did not see any faculty members standing at the border after school. Nevertheless, the narrative of **Sheila** shows the surveillance over residency requirements is not contained to the school premises, rather it begins and ends at the border crossing port in the case of those in Mexicali and Calexico. It is being 'constantly tested' as **Abraham** would say. In the case of the pupils in Calexico, Sam Ellis store was a welcoming and safe place to catch a breath, a sip of water or just to wait until it would be safe to cross back home.

The brief accounts in this section portrayed a mixture of positive and negative experiences after school. The array of diverse experiences shows the complexity and contradictions that interplay in a transborder practice. The developed adaptive capacities helped the participants to overcome challenging situations experienced after school such as temperature related, prolonged stays on the U.S. side, or surveillance. Once the learner gets to the PoE and crosses to Mexico, the last part of their transborder day begins.

### III. Crossing the Border Southbound

The sound of the metal revolving doors hitting some locks reminds me of crossing from Calexico to Mexicali by foot. This sound is perceivable meters away from the Port of Entry. It is constant and blends with the rest of the street noises. While transborder pupils and students walk once again through those buildings, McDonalds, Jack in the Box, Sam Ellis store are left behind and trade for *tacos*, *tortas*, and other Mexican snacks. Walking or crossing southbound in general is different than northbound crossing.

The crossing to Mexico is more fluid and takes less time. The participants said it would take them a couple of minutes to cross to Mexicali and about thirty minutes to Tijuana. In December however, it can take up to one or two hours to cross to Mexico. Interestingly, most of the participants crossing by foot in both cities would not mention specifically this moment of southbound crossing but rather merged it in the entire narrative of the after school commute. The participants had detailed anecdotes and memories regarding this walk from the schools to the Port of Entry and then



from the border zone (on the Mexican side) to their houses, without mentioning the southbound checkpoint. Almost as if this step of the process did not take place. When in contrast, 100% of the participants claimed that crossing the border to the U.S. is ultimately the hardest part of the transborder journey. In this sense, the border is perceived as an 'enormous apparatus' that elongates the distance between Mexico and the U.S., but compresses the distances between these two countries when crossing southbound. This difference of perception is due to the lax dynamic when entering Mexico from Calexico or San Diego.

Once on the Mexican side, the pupils and students were no longer afraid of the people lining up waiting to cross to the U.S., nor of authorities and harassing questions. The entrance to Mexico is no longer dependable on subjective decisions of immigration authorities. In just a few border ports or *garitas* such as Pedwest in Tijuana, pedestrians entering Mexico are asked for immigration documents. Even more rare is to have your backpacks checked. Nevertheless, the participants had to be more careful with their belongings since they could get pick pocketed once on the Mexican side. Two of the participants located each in different border cities said noticing homeless people specifically approaching pupils in uniforms and asked for U.S. money. Another participant in the Mexicali-Calexico border said once she stopped at a shop next to the border and a man followed her until she took a collective taxi. Ultimately, this feeling of vulnerability can be perceived at the speed in which these pupils and students would walk through those corridors on the Mexican side of the Ports of Entry.

In this context, the pedestrian participants moved away from the border area as soon as possible in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. Sometimes the parents would pick them up at a specific location or use the public transportation. The fluidity of southbound border crossing is not experienced as such when crossing by car. However, it does not mean that the process is as hard as crossing to the U.S. In fact, the participants in Tijuana-San Diego crossing to Mexico by car said southbound crossing is much easier and faster even if waiting in line for an hour.

Definitely, crossing southbound by car is more regulated and can also take hours depending on the time of the day, or the season. For instance, longer lines form during Christmas from the U.S. to Mexico. The two Mexican authorities entrusted to monitor southbound border crossing are officers belonging to the *Servicio de Administración Tributaria (SAT)* (Tax Administration Service) and members of the Mexican army. When approaching at the Port of Entry on the U.S. side, the cars are split into different lanes depending on the merchandise they bring. Before entering Mexican territory, each lane has a stop light with a bar. The green light lets the car go without revision. The red light requires the car to be inspected. This revision is supposedly conducted randomly by Mexican authorities. In this case, the car and belongings are inspected with the main purpose of detecting merchandise that should be declared as per established regulations. Also, any SAT member or a soldier can instruct a car to pull over if considered suspicious.

The type of goods or merchandise brought into Mexico, as well as the quantity of such, are regulated. Border residents benefit from duty exception allowing them to cross to Mexico goods for personal use without exceeding one hundred and fifty U.S. dollars per day. If crossing by car, the limit would be of four hundred U.S. dollars if two or more people are in the car. During the month of December, the amount allowed is of three hundred U.S. dollars (SAT, 2019) due to Christmas festivities and vacations. Despite the merchandise and commercial regulations, it is still relatively easy to enter Mexico from the U.S. The delays and inspections are not related to immigration processes but to the taxable merchandise entering Mexico.

As mentioned, the participants estimated that the waiting time to cross to Mexico by car was of about an hour during peak hours in Tijuana-San Diego. In the case of Mexicali, such time was of thirty or forty minutes. During this time, the participants listened to music, did homework or talked to each other. On one occasion, an extraordinarily long line to cross to Mexicali caught **Abraham** in his carpool and he remembers:

Una vez, me acuerdo y jamás se me va a olvidar, de regreso a Mexicali iba en el *carpool* en verano, yo estaba en tercero de primaria y había una fila enorme que llegaba hasta WalMart. Hicimos alrededor de una hora y media de fila. Por fortuna a mí no me dieron ganas de ir al baño, pero a otra niña que iba en el carro sí. Entonces la mamá que iba manejando era nuestra única supervisión y nos dijo 'niños, ¿van a ir al baño?'. Por fortuna paralelo a nosotros había un 7 eleven o un AM PM. Todos los niños nos bajamos del carro en medio de la calle y nos cruzamos a la tienda para hacer del baño. Hacía mucho calor y la señora no encendía el aire acondicionado y pues eso nos obligaba a tomar agua.

(Once, I remember and I will never forget, on the way back to Mexicali I was in the carpool during summer, I was in third grade and there was a huge line that reached all the way to Walmart. We waited about one hour and a half on the line. Fortunately, I didn't feel like going to the bathroom, but another girl who was in the car did. So the mother driving was our only supervision and she said 'children, are you going to the bathroom?' Fortunately, parallel to us there was a 7 eleven or an AM PM. All the children got out of the car in the middle of the road and crossed to the store to use the bathroom. That day was very hot and the mom driving us did not turn on the air conditioner and well, that made us drank water.)

Even though similar situations occurred to many participants, they seemed to not have much to share about southbound crossing experiences at the Ports of Entry. The element that coincides with northbound crossing to a certain extent is the waiting time but at a different scale. To make a one-hour line is not easy but in comparison to crossing to the U.S., is perceive as almost irrelevant. The accounts of the participants are indicative then of the following: i) time management is exercised on

both sides of the border and, ii) waiting time is one important factor for elongating the border, coupled with statist practices conducted by U.S. CBP officers.

By comparing the accounts of transborder learners crossing to Mexico by foot with those by car, it is clear the waiting times make the border thicker for the latter and almost nonexistent for the former. However, these pupils faced another set of after school challenges related to being transborder. The following section looks at the limited access this population have to after school activities as they are conditioned by transborder practices.

#### **IV. After School Challenges**

As accounted in the previous section, some transborder learners might have a fragmented and challenging afternoon. Such conditions inevitably lead to question the participation in after school activities often offered by the schools or community centres. These programmes cover a variety of activities that go from literacy to sports and arts.

To participate in after school activities offered by the schools has a positive impact on the children's academic and personal skills (Pierce, K., Hamm, J., and Vandell, D., 1999, Posner, J. and Vandell, D., 1994, Huang, D. & Dietel, R., 2011). Afterschool Alliance reported that 88% of parents agree afterschool programmes helped the child develop stronger social skills. Moreover, 82% of the kids were excited about learning and improving work and studying habits. Also, 78% gained skills related to math and sciences (After School Alliance, 2012). To be part of such programmes, parents need to consider the time and place of the activities as well as the costs.

In 2014, 29% of all students (10.2 million) enrolled in an after school activity in the U.S. were Hispanic students. In contrast, 11% of this population was unsupervised or alone from three to six in the afternoon. California holds the first position as the state with most enrolled children in after school activities, that is, 25% (1,661,374) of the entire student population from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. During that same year and, in relation to children living in concentrated poverty, the parents disclosed some of the factors that prevented the enrolment of the children in these activities such as: the cost of the programme, programme hours of operation, and the dangers of commuting back home (After School Alliance, 2014).

These activities in California are partially or completely funded by the state through the After School Education and Safety (ASES) programme. The ASES was passed by proposition 49 in 2002 to provide literacy, physical activities, academic enrichment, and safety to students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (SDCOE, 2019). The state provides funding to public and private schools, and community centres either to maintain ongoing after school programmes, or to implement new ones. For the fiscal year 2019, the Calexico United School District was awarded 1,327,715.31 U.S. dollars for such activities. As for San Diego, budget was only allocated for Health Sciences Middle School, and Integrity Charter School for \$177,559.20 each (CDE, 2019,). However, there is no detailed information as to how the budget was spent by the school districts, the number of students benefited, nor the orientation of the programmes.

Even with the state support and evidence of the benefits of after school activities, it is hard for some transborder pupils to have access to such programmes. The main reasons are compatible with the ones reported by Afterschool Alliance: i) cannot afford them, ii) the hours of the programme are not compatible with the family needs and, iii) cannot guarantee safe travel back home to the Mexican side. A few exceptions among the participants of this research were detected. For instance, one of them was part of the school football team. However, most of the participants just crossed the border back to Mexico as soon as possible, as some of them would say *'before it gets dark'*. Mostly because of the long commute and how dangerous the border zone can be at night if travelling by themselves. Besides stating that they were hardly involved in any extracurricular activities in the U.S., former transborder pupils enrolled in public schools reflected on the affective relations with other kids on the Mexican side. While growing up, most of the friends one makes at that age, besides relatives, are school peers or close-by neighbours. Since this group of transborder pupils could not disclose their true residency location, the interactions were somehow limited to inside school.

During one sunny morning I met with **Josemar** and **Alejandro** in San Diego, I asked them about the relationships with friends they had while being transborder pupils. Both participants went to public schools and had similar answers. **Josemar** shared:

Yo por lo menos tenía una relación muy diferente con mis amigos, mis amigos de Tijuana no existían. Los que tenía era porque vivían a dos casas de mis papás entonces me juntaba con ellos los fines de semana. Pero mis amigos que tenía durante la primaria y secundaria estaban principalmente aquí en Estados Unidos en su mayoría. Fui creciendo y sí cambió mi relación con mis amigos.

(I had a very different relationship with my friends, my friends from Tijuana did not exist. The ones I had lived two houses away from my parent's house so I would see them on the weekends. But the friends I had during primary and secondary school were mostly here in the United States for the most part. As I grew up, the relationship with my friends did change.)

**Alejandro** took a minute to think and reflect about the question and explained:

Los estudiantes transfronterizos no tienen amigos en Tijuana y si tienen, son vecinos. Mis primos son transfronterizos y toda su vida han vivido en Tijuana y han cruzado toda su vida y no tienen amigos. Los amigos que tienen es porque mi tío tiene un restaurante y tiene amigos que llevan a sus hijos al restaurante to *'hang out'*. Pero no hay amigos, te la pasas todo el día cruzando y llegas a la casa a las seis y haces tú tarea y ya, te quedas encerrado.

(Transborder pupils do not have friends in Tijuana and if they do, they are their neighbours. My cousins are transborder pupils and throughout their lives they have lived in Tijuana and being crossing the border, their entire lives, and have no friends. And the ones they do have is because my uncle has a restaurant and has friends who take their children to hang out with my cousins. But you don't have any friends, you spend all day crossing and you get home at six, do your homework and that is it, you stay in.)

To develop social and literacy skills are important for school performance and personal growth. The limited opportunity transborder pupils have for such activities is a detriment to children with already challenging daily practices. The accounts of the lack of friends in the case of some participants observed, could have a negative impact while growing up and later in adulthood. The effects of transborder practices on the mental health of the participants have been observed throughout the accounts. Anxieties, fears, nervousness, and limited support from teachers and parents, affect school performances and wellbeing. The long commutes and the overall transborder dynamic have important effects on different aspects of transborder learners that are school related, but beyond the bell. Moreover, the participants underscored the limited time available after school which was used for mainly doing homework.

As Afterschool Alliance reported, after school programmes help the pupils and students develop literacy, academic and social skills. Interactions between pupils in different settings definitely seem to be a positive dynamic. Such programmes are implemented primarily by public and private schools without necessarily taking into consideration the peculiarities of transborder dynamics. Like a domino effect, the limited inclusion and disregarding for the transborder reality prevented most transborder pupils to participate in such programmes. These programmes could have helped them at an academic and personal level. To this regard, the next section gives accounts of the reasons why after school literacy programmes are relevant for this population. The analysis centres on limited parental presence and help with schoolwork.

## **V. Homework Help**

The role of homework in the U.S. education system has been turbulent to say the least. It has oscillated between pro-homework or homework-abolition episodes since the beginning of the 1900s. It wasn't until the Cold-War era and the launching of Sputnik that U.S. policy makers got worried about the level of education, and its practices vis-à-vis Russian peers. The role of homework, once again, became important in the debate on education. Since then, it has constituted to be an important practice in education worldwide (San Francisco Gate, 1999).

Usually, when pupils and students do homework they are not accompanied by educators. However, some family members or care givers might have some participation. To this regard, helping with homework represents just one type of parent involvement in education as accounted by Lee and Bowen (2006).

In the author's words: 'Cultural capital for parents related to the education system exists in three forms: personal dispositions, attitudes, and knowledge gained from experience; connections to education-related objects (e.g., books, computers, academic credentials), and connections to education-related institutions (e.g., schools, universities, libraries)' (Lee, J. and Bowen, N. 2006:197). In this sense, the background of the parents (socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, academic) affects the level of parent involvement in the education of their children.

A robust literature of the benefits of family engagement in education is available (Henderson, A. and Mapp, K., 2002, Dearing, E., Kreider, H. and Weiss, H., 2008, Jeynes, W., 2012, DeCastro, B. and Catsambis, S., 2009, Mapp, K. & Kuttner, P., 2013). Throughout the United States, family engagement became a focal point in education and quickly integrated to state policies of the sector. By the year 2010, thirty-nine states as well as the District of Columbia, had enacted policies with the objective of building an assertive and comprehensive partnership between schools and the parents/families of the students (Mapp, K. & Kuttner, P., 2013).

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted and reauthorized on the 10 December 2015 by President Barack Obama as the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' (ESSA). On its Title I, parent and family involvement is reassured as one important pillar of the student's academic success. It emphasizes the co-responsibility that educators, schools, and families share on education attainment and literacy development. ESSA not only determines the required participation of parents in school activities and the role in after school literacy development, but also stresses the need for schools and districts to build such capacity. Furthermore, Title I considers cultural diversity of the families and exhorts schools to provide parental literacy guidance, or other types of support requested by the parents (California Department of Education, 2019).

For such quest, the California Department of Education published a Toolkit in 2017 for family engagement with the purpose of helping schools and districts develop strategies compliant with ESSA. Special focus was put on underrepresented students of the state, including immigrant children. The publication adequately underscores the importance of effective family engagement based on i) trusting relationships between school educators and the families and, ii) connections of learning.

To build, restore or establish trusting relationships, educators and education authorities should begin by removing all deficit thinking embedded in some of the assumptions. To overcome this, educators should be culturally comprehensive by understanding the family or community background that will aid them in the construction of trusting relationships.

The second important dimension is the development of learning connections. These refer to activities that contribute to the pupil's learning process where the family or the parents are involved. Such learning connections can be challenging to create if the communication between the educators and the parents is intermittent or limited. On occasion, the family could be under the impression that it cannot contribute as much to the pupil's education. If that is the case, the educator should highlight the value of parental involvement and together work towards the same academic objectives for the pupils (Bodenhausen, N., and Birge, M., 2017).

It is important to acknowledge the progress such recent policy framework represents. Particularly when coupled with the freedom of school districts to develop and adapt programmes based on the specific characteristics of the pupils. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go in this respect. The following data shows the importance of fostering parents' involvement and some of the reasons to insist on such matter. The intention here is not to assess or measure results after the implementation of ESSA in 2015, since the majority of the participants were no longer in primary or secondary school. Rather, the intention is to understand some of the challenges that should be addressed by school authorities and educators. For the purpose of this research, parents' involvement is observed with homework help and at school participation based on parent-teacher meetings, especially observing language barriers in the context of transborder pupils in the Cali-Baja region.

For such objective, the participants were asked about parental involvement with homework after school. In the case of those that did receive parental help, noted the relation between the parent's level of English and the connection with the content. Most of the participants, approximately 90%, in both cities, acknowledged to have had some parental involvement with limited English language understanding and comprehension. In such cases the participants translated to Spanish the question and the content of the homework instruction. To be a language broker is a practice well observed in transnational students in the U.S. (Cline, T., Crafter, S. and Prokopiou, E., 2018, Crafter, S., 2018, Dorner, L., Orellana, M., Li-Grining, C., 2007, McQuillan, J. and Tse, L., 1995). A couple of participants in Tijuana that became transborder after living in the U.S., said one or both parents were somehow proficient in English and able to provide help with the homework without a considerable language barrier.

Even a few parents took this matter into their own hands and developed practices (parent's hacks) to provide the children with the needed support. Two participants said their parents actually learnt English to be more involved in the academic journey. Nevertheless, most of the participants in this research said to have relied on themselves and school peers to find guidance with their homework. This was true even if their parents sometimes helped them with the task. In the case of transborder pupils with one or more siblings with the same dynamic, they said they would rely first on each other and then on school friends. This situation had negative outcomes for some participants with younger siblings. Such is the case of **Marisa** while studying at OLGA school in Calexico:

Recuerdo que me frustraba no poder sacarme *A honourable* or *B honourable*, por más que me esforzara no podía sacarme un 10 porque no entendía lo que me decían y mi mamá se frustraba también porque me quería ayudar a estudiar, pero ella tampoco le entendía muy bien. Entonces ella con lo poco que entendía me ayudaba. Fue hasta que yo aprendí inglés que pude desarrollarme con mis calificaciones y me tocó entonces ayudarles a mis hermanas. Cuando yo terminaba mi tarea mi mamá me decía 'ayúdale a tu hermana' y yo le decía que no

quería, que yo ya había terminado mi tarea y que quería ser libre, pero ella me decía que les tenía que ayudar porque ella no podía.

(I remember that it frustrated me that I couldn't get A honourable or B honourable, even if I tried really hard, I couldn't get a 10 because I didn't understand what they were saying, and my mom was frustrated because she wanted to help me study, but she didn't understand it very well either. So she helped me with the limited English she understood. It wasn't until I learned English that I could develop my grades and then I had to help my sisters. After finishing my homework, my mother would tell me 'help your sister' and I would tell her that I didn't want to, that I had already finished my homework and that I wanted to be free but she told me that I had to help them because she couldn't.)

Marisa's narrative highlights an important characteristic of transborder learners with younger siblings. Academic and administrative support was provided by the participants acquiring an extra unsolicited responsibility after school. However, it is important to highlight the different ways a parent is involved with homework help. Such is the case of one student that remembers her mother calling other moms that spoke English, and asking them about the homework assignment. This was to make sure she was understanding it correctly. In the case of **Dominique**, her mother would speak some English but got to a point where extra help was needed. Her parents had the means to provide it as she explains:

Mi mamá nos ayudaba con las tareas hasta donde lo lograba entender. Cuando empezamos a batallar y ella ya no entendía, nos inscribieron a un centro en Tijuana en donde nos ayudaban con tareas por la tarde especialmente matemáticas y en inglés. Era una escuelita. Se llamaba *Learning Center*. Las tutoras eran mexicanas, pero ellas habían estudiado en Estados Unidos y decidieron abrir esta escuela para ayudar con tareas. A esas tutorías en Tijuana íbamos alumnos que estudiábamos en San Diego.

(My mom helped us [Dominique and her brother] with our homework as far as she could understand it. When we started to struggle with it and she was no longer able to understand it, we were enrolled in a tutoring centre in Tijuana where we received help during the afternoons, especially with mathematics and English. It was like a little school. It was called Learning Center. The tutors were Mexican but studied in the United States and decided to open this school to help students with their homework. The pupils attending this centre were also living in Tijuana but attending schools in San Diego.)

The accounts of these participants show different resources the parents and themselves used with homework assignments. As stated previously, parent involvement in children's education is



conducted in various ways. Some of the aforementioned resources were also used in teacher-parent meetings that required them to cross the border to the U.S. and speak to educators in English.

However, immigration and border struggles such as border waiting times, also affect parents' participation and involvement at school. It is important to clarify that parents do get involved, but such practice can be affected or limited by certain factors emanated from border practices. To name a few, based on the participant's accounts: i) some parents cannot cross the border due to previous deportation records, ii) the type of visa held did not grant them access to the fastest crossing lane, iii) fear to face any type of authority figure in the U.S., iv) the time of the parent-teacher meetings overlapped with working hours and, v) the meetings were conducted in English only. The consequences of such were in detriment to the pupils.

Broken communication between parents and teachers is not exclusive to border schools. However, the causes for limited communication in this context could be attributed to the hardship of the transborder dynamic. In this sense, and aware of the importance of a strong dialogue between parents and teachers, some efforts have been made by civil society to overcome such challenges in the Cali-Baja border.

The non-profit organisation Excellence and Justice in Education (EJE), was founded by members of the Hispanic community based in El Cajon, California. The organisation is partnered with *Escuelas para la Familia* in Tijuana. The purpose of this partnership is to promote parents' involvement with schools on both sides of the border. Both organisations claim that parental involvement has a direct effect on the school performance of the pupils. By increasing the dialogue and communication between parents and school authorities, the academic services provided to Hispanic pupils would improve. Thus, the social and cultural marginalisation of this demographic population would decrease.

The San Diego Social Venture Partners, along with San Diego State University conducted a study to measure the impact of the EJE and *Escuelas para la Familia* collaboration, via the evaluation of fifty students involved with this program. The results showed that EJE children had a significant difference scoring by as much as twenty points higher in reading, language, math, and spelling, in comparison to pupils not being part of the collaboration (Kada, K., Kiy, R., 2004).

The results of the programme by EJE and *Escuelas para la Familia* is a good example of the benefits of acknowledging the transborder practice and implementing appropriate processes. School authorities should be able to establish pertinent mechanisms aligned to the specific needs of the learners at the border stripe. Education and the learning progress of the pupils Mexico and California share should be more important than the 'line that divides'.

It is important to underscore that not all parents remain at the margin of school activities or meetings. About 80% of the participants of this research that attended private schools said the parents went to parent-teacher meetings. Once at school, the difficulty encountered was the language barrier. Spanish speaking parents engaging in conversations with English speaking teachers. When asked the way the parents and the teachers communicated when such language barrier existed, the participants said that one person of the school staff would translate if needed.

If more than one person was needed for such task, then some of the pupils would translate for the parents.

Ironically, Spanish language became valuable for the teachers and parents as long as not spoken during classes. Such selectivity of language permission is indicative of school authorities perceiving pedagogical practices and student-related administrative processes (parent-teacher meetings), to be unrelated. However, as shown with the case of the work between EJE and *Escuelas para la Familia*, parental involvement is an integral part of the pupil's school performance and academic success. Hopefully, the recent policies regarding parent involvement in education will contribute to a better understanding of the special dynamic of this demographic population. For this reason, it is paramount that Mexico and California continue to work jointly to address the challenges of the pupils and students they share. For now, to reflect on the end of a transborder day is important as a reminder of the sites, power structures, and hard dynamics this population navigate in one day.

## **VI. End of a Transborder Day at the Cali-Baja Border**

Finally, the day comes to an end. In less than twenty-four hours, transborder learners have navigated two countries, different power structures, central and counter-pedagogies, and long commutes. They also endured harsh weather and different types of structural, physical, and gender violence. There is no more queuing, language surveillance, nervousness or anxiety for meeting U.S. authorities. They can now rest and be ready to do it all over again the next day when they wake up early to cross the border. To reflect upon the end of the day gives an opportunity to briefly review the sites the participants navigated in twenty-four hours, the dynamics that shaped such spaces, and the challenges of a transborder life.

A transborder day of a learner begins as early as 3:00 am for some in Tijuana and later for those in Mexicali. To cross the border is one of the first things they have to do. Some put their uniforms on, some others remind themselves of the story they have to tell at the U.S. checkpoint. However, all of them wish for a fast and uneventful border crossing. In this particular moment, whilst still at home, they kept thinking about the reasons for enduring such a hard practice: 'This is a great opportunity', 'to have what my parents could not', 'to have an extra advantage'. Although the parents reasons for making their children transborder vary, a local and transborder version of the American dream is enacted. One that integrates the Mexican side of the border and is achievable through receiving U.S. education.

As discussed in the first empirical chapter, some pupils and students became transborder to have access to the U.S., to remain in the U.S. or as an intergenerational family identity. These categories reflect the main three reasons observed in the participant's narratives when asked why they were transborder. Additionally, and in relation to future job or life opportunities, the participants reflected on the advantages of being proficient in English language and knowledgeable about U.S. society. To cross the border daily is a small price to pay in comparison to the advantages the

parents envisioned for them. With this idea in mind, they continue to the second site of the dynamic, the land Port of Entry.

The U.S. land Ports of Entry are spaces hard to transit as these are a power structure mediated by CBP law enforcement. All of the participants expressed that this part was the hardest aspect of their transborder life. This claim is due to the long waiting times to cross the border that entailed enduring the weather, physical tiredness, and gender and physical violence. Time control is one of the tactics of power implemented by CBP officers. This can elongate or compress the border. After the 2001 terrorist attacks, the border dynamic changed as crossing protocols became harsher. Since then, waiting times at the border increased to up to four hours in the case of San Diego and to two or three hours in the case of Calexico. In this context, to figuratively reduce the waiting times is of most importance and thus, transborder learners developed border hacks to help them cope with the hardship of the practice.

There are an array of border hacks that include eating breakfast while waiting in line, to catch up with friends, do homework, and to be politically active. These border hacks are counter-pedagogies based on empirical knowledge that helped them navigate the Port of Entry. One, and perhaps the only example of transborderism being acknowledged at the PoE, was the establishment of the student lane in Calexico and San Diego. The purpose was to help transborder learners on private schools to cross the border faster. However, it created a more adverse atmosphere at the PoE adding another element of violence to the journey. In this sense, the coping mechanisms developed at and derived from the Port of Entry influenced the learner's transborder identity formation and aided them in transiting the second power structure. This structure is also the third site of the day, the U.S. education system.

Schools located at the border stripe in Calexico and San Diego have learners with a unique dynamic that should be reflected in school policies and pedagogies. However, it is not the case. In fact, the participant's narratives show how disconnected the schools are in relation to the transborder context. For instance, instead of fostering bilingualism and biliteracy on the pupils, punitive systems are in place to force the pupils to speak in English only. With regards to teaching methods, only one participant experienced a pedagogical connection that contemplated both sides of the border and was used to improve her critical thinking. Nevertheless, border enforcement practices were observed in most of the participant's narratives including normalising watching CBP officers chasing undocumented immigrants inside a school in Calexico. However, the transborder practice of the participants did not finish when the school bell rang. It continued in after school activities and on the way back to the family home on Mexicali or Tijuana.

As established in this chapter, the fourth and last site that a transborder pupil or student transits in a day is crossing back to the Mexican side. The influence of border enforcement practices is still observable in different ways depending on the participant condition. For instance, those in public schools are subjects of surveillance at the PoE on the U.S. side. Those with parents that do not speak English had more difficulties getting higher grades since the parents could not help extensively with the homework. Moreover, the importance on partaking in after school activities

and parental involvement in the school were determined to be essential for the pupil's performance, although it can be challenging in a transborder context.

When back at home after school, they continue experiencing transborderism when doing homework in English, when not having many friends on the Mexican side, and when not having too much time to rest. This shows that transborderism is not intermittent but a continuous condition that adapts to different settings and needs across the Cali-Baja border. The pupils and students constantly mediate their identities and the border throughout the day, making transborderism a conscious and bodily life condition, and not a mere act of border crossing as it is sometimes reduced to.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The chapter analysed the fourth instalment transited by a transborder pupil, the commute back home to the Mexican side from the U.S., including some of the activities conducted beyond the bell that are still school related. Such analysis contributes to the further understanding of transborderism and its practices in relation to education. Furthermore, the chapter helped to identify specific challenges that should be addressed by school authorities, and the Mexican and California government.

This segment of the journey took place between three to ten in the afternoon. This window of time corresponds to the accounts from the participants with different transborder dynamics. For instance, some would cross the border to Mexico immediately after school, whilst others had to wait some time and even hours to do so. This was the case of transborder pupils enrolled in public schools in Calexico that needed to wait for the Port of Entry to be clear of school staff registering those crossing southbound. The story of Vanessa as a member of a transborder family, demonstrated the prolonged hours spent in a car or public spaces until the family was able to cross to Tijuana. Her account calls us to rethink notions of homelessness and food insecurity in this transborder context.

The transborder pupil's commute from the school to the Port of Entry was different than the morning experience. In the case of the pupils in Calexico walking to Mexicali, they would have 'pit stops' to recover from the sun and the high temperature of the city. The participants spoke fondly about Mr. Ellis, the owner of an emblematic store in Calexico called Sam Ellis. Mr. Ellis would provide temporary shelter for the pupils and some water before continuing their walk to Mexico. This approach stands in contrast with some racist community members and practices this population faced in schools and whilst commuting during the morning. This pit stop was especially welcomed by the transborder pupils in public schools in Calexico. Education authorities or faculty members would stand at the border checkpoint before exiting the U.S. to register those crossing back to Mexico. The objective would be to start an enquiry and determine the enrolment compliancy of the pupil. The liaison between school authorities and law enforcement is observed again by allowing such mechanism of surveillance at this specific place under control of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. However, this after school surveillance dynamic seemed to only affect those pupils crossing from Calexico to Mexicali. The amount of people crossing through such a small Port of Entry in comparison to Tijuana-San Diego, allowed for such dynamic to be developed and observed.

With regards to southbound crossing to Mexico, the pedestrian participants in both border cities would almost skip this political process in their narratives. They argued that it did not take much time so it was not a relevant aspect of the after school commute. It was almost as if the border was crossed unperceived. In the case of the participants crossing to Mexico by car they said the waiting line would be of around one hour in the case of San Diego and of around thirty to forty minutes in the case of Calexico. Even with this important waiting time, they said crossing to Mexico is much easier and faster. Indeed, to enter Mexico from the U.S. cannot be compared to northbound crossing. Just in a few Ports of Entry, Mexican immigration authorities request an immigration document if crossing by foot, and in the case of those by car, a stoplight will determine if the car gets inspected. Such inspection however, is related to taxable merchandise being crossed to Mexico, and not to national security concerns. In this sense, it is evident that waiting times or state time management contributes to the thickening or compressing of the border. The longer the wait, the distance between the border cities gets elongated, thickening the border. The less the wait, the more the distance gets compressed.

As stated throughout the chapter, transborder dynamics academically affect the pupils beyond the school bell. For instance, the participants stated not being able to participate in any after school activities since the programme hours did not coincide with the transborder schedule. A couple of participants did participate in one of these programmes mainly through sports. One important objective of these activities was for the pupil to develop literacy and social skills. It is important for transborder learners to have fair access to such programmes and be supported with the academic challenges related to language and people skills. As accounted by Josemar and Alejandro, it was hard to make friends with this demanding dynamic. Also, transborder pupils do not receive much parental support when it comes to homework. The language barrier is also evident during parent-teaching meetings where translation is required most of the time. The lack of acknowledgement and incorporation of transborderism into school practices, affect the pupil's academic performance severely as the accounts showed.

The 'Every Student Succeeds Act' enacted in 2015 underscores parent involvement as an important pillar of the pupil's success. Hopefully, the recent policy regulations will contribute to better the academic performance of transnational pupils. Nevertheless, this Act does not consider characteristics of transborder practices on its enactment. However, Every Student Succeeds Act is relevant for this research for the following reasons: i) it shows the interest of the state authorities in education to develop and implement comprehensive policies based on the diversity of pupils' backgrounds, ii) it underscores the importance of parental support in school performance and, iii) it provides school districts with the possibility of developing programmes tailored for the specific characteristic of the pupils. Aligned with the cause of this Act, binational cooperation in education should be able to address the transborder challenges discussed, and join efforts to contribute to the academic success of transborder learners.

To reflect on the end of a transborder day allows us to overview what happens in twenty-four hours when being a transborder learner at the Cali-Baja region. They transit through four sites a day ('At Home', 'PoE', 'At School', 'Back to the Family Home'), they encounter two power structures (PoE and the U.S. education system), and navigate pedagogies (institutional) and counter-pedagogies (border and in-school border hacks) that help them throughout the transborder dynamic. To discuss a typical transborder day with the participants, sheds light on the pressing challenges and hardship they faced. Such empirical information contributes to the consistency of the figure of a transborder learner, to understand transborderism further in this region, and to develop effective binational instruments of cooperation in education for this population. For such quest, the following chapter provides the closing remarks on a theoretical, empirical, and political ground. Furthermore, a binational framework in education between Mexico and California is proposed in support of transborder learners in the Cali-Baja region.

# CONCLUSIONS

## I. Introduction

This thesis explored transborderism through the perspectives and the figure of transborder pupils and students in the Cali-Baja region. Through an ethnographic-informed approach, a deeper understanding of transborderism and the Mexico-U.S. border was conducted. The collected evidence stemmed from field observations and in-depth interviews with former transborder pupils or students, current transborder students at the time of the interview, one prominent scholar in transborderism, and governmental authorities in international education. In total, thirty participants informed the present work. This research was conducted in seven cities in three different countries during two field visits, for a total of ten months of fieldwork between 2017 and 2019.

Since the beginning of this project, some limitations were detected. For instance, i) limited updated quantitative information about transborder pupils and students, ii) difficult border crossing processes that limited the number of feasible methods to conduct during fieldwork and, iii) most participants attended private schools. However, the narratives provided important original empirical information to grasp the complexity of transborder practices, and their impact on the academic journey of transborder learners in the Cali-Baja region. This investigation was also conducted prior to the COVID-19 outbreak and international travel restrictions. In the present chapter, the empirical data collected and analysed is discussed in the form of findings, theoretical contributions, and policy implications.

First, the main empirical findings are presented focusing on the challenges of unaccompanied minors crossing this international border, the reasons for becoming transborder learners, the analysis of the role of the PoEs as the most challenging site of the transborder dynamic, the U.S. education system as a transborder power structure, and the adaptability of transborder practices based on different contexts. Then, the theoretical contributions to transborderism are accounted underscoring the importance of looking at transborderism through the concrete figure of transborder pupils and students, the embedded understandings that keep reproducing this practice, the significance of counter-pedagogies, the analysis of the element of time, and the inclusion of anxieties and affection as part of the subjective and social exchanges. In the last part of the chapter, practical policy recommendations are presented highlighting their feasibility abiding by the current binational framework of cooperation in education between Mexico and California. For this, a brief discussion on cooperation in transnational education is presented to emphasise the feasibility of the policy recommendations. The chapter ends with brief closing remarks reflecting on the current Mexico-U.S. border closure due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the opportunity it represents for transborderism.

## II. Empirical Findings

The empirical findings of this research exceeded the initial enquiries and concerns. For instance, mental health and wellbeing issues related to transborder practices were observed and should be addressed promptly by the pertinent authorities. The following information stemmed from narratives presenting a local panorama of the enactment of transborderism through the perspectives of transborder learners.

Empirically, this work shows the complexity of transborderism as a practice, emphasizes the importance of education for the process, and the reproduction of border dynamics in schools located at the Cali-Baja border stripe. Hence, this thesis contributes overall to further the study of dynamics that are characteristic of the Mexico-U.S. border. It does so by discussing the challenges unaccompanied documented minors face, the hardship of border practices at the PoEs, the reasons for becoming transborder learners, border enforcement practices in schools, and how transborder practices change responding to different contexts.

### II.I Transborder Pupils and Students are Unaccompanied Minors at the Cali-Baja Border

Most transborder pupils and students that cross the border by foot from Mexicali or Tijuana, do so without parental companionship. Based on the data collected, 95% of the participants that crossed the Mexicali-Calexico border by foot, were unaccompanied minors. They crossed in groups with other pupils but without adult supervision. Less than 30% crossed the border only by car, as crossing by foot was seen as dangerous or the school was not located near the Port of Entry. Crossing the border by car is a slower process as automobiles are inspected more thoroughly. For this reason, the majority of the participants crossed the border walking. In just a few cases, they would either cross by foot or car, depending on other circumstances. In the case of those participants located in Tijuana-San Diego, almost the same amount of former transborder pupils crossed by foot without any adult or parent companionship. This means that transborder pupils located in these border cities are unaccompanied minors crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. However, the U.S. government only considers unaccompanied children those who do not hold a lawful immigration document to enter the country (Congressional Research Services, 2019). Thus, the country's responsibility on safeguarding is limited to children without documentation.

In no way does this work diminish the violent and precarious conditions that undocumented unaccompanied children experience crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. However, it is also vital to consider safeguarding implications of all unaccompanied minors crossing this border regardless of the documentation they hold. This relates to the traditional understanding of vulnerability being exclusively linked to undocumented status and crossings in a border context. Approximately 70% of the participants did not consider themselves vulnerable since they had a passport or visa. The same



view was shared by the Mexican government officials interviewed. This confirms that only undocumented border crossings are considered of concern requiring governmental support and thus, understanding transborderism as a privileged practice based on the possession of lawful immigration documentation. However, specific protocols are needed for documented unaccompanied minors as border crossing is a violent process as discussed in the empirical chapters. Fear, long waiting times, physical, mental and gender violence, and harassment from U.S. CBP officers are some of the everyday challenges pupils face when crossing to school. These practices directly affect the pupil's wellbeing, physical safety, and school performance. For this reason, child safeguarding protocols should also be in place for documented unaccompanied minors crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. These safeguarding protocols should not be simple or express 'solutions' such as the already existing student lane, which only benefits pupils attending U.S. private schools. Additionally, the establishment of this lane ultimately incremented the level of violence suffered by transborder learners at the PoEs in Calexico and San Diego.

## II.II The American Dream is the Underlying Catalyser for Transborder Practices

The data collected for this research shows a clear link between the American dream and the beginning of a transborder life of a family member. Chapter III discusses the reasons for becoming a transborder learner, a life decision made for them by their parents. When analysing the parents' motivations as to why they were enrolled in a U.S. school while living in Mexicali and Tijuana, remnants of the elements of the American dream were present in 100% of the narratives.

Although the paradigm of the American dream entails a worse Mexican reality, the understanding of the dream by these parents was transformed into a transborder version. Such transborder configuration of the dream allows for its deconstruction and focuses on specific elements. Those elements referred to better life and job opportunities based on mainly English language proficiency or U.S. nationality. In any case, these would be solidified by U.S. sociocultural assimilation rendered by U.S. schools. Furthermore, the dream contemplates at its core the 'other side', Mexicali and Tijuana. This is reflected when granting the possibility of living or working on either side of the border. Traditionally, the American dream was thought to only be possible in U.S. territory. As a result, the flows of migration to that country incremented. In the context of this research, the parents considered transborderism as an alternative to enjoying some of the benefits of the dream, without relocating to U.S. territory.

In this context, the U.S. education system became the main path through which better future livelihood could be achieved by these pupils and students. This is different from asseverating that education, by itself and on either side of the border, would grant a better job or life opportunities. It is evident in the case of these participants that obtaining U.S. education was crucial for the parents' objectives, whilst still residing in Mexicali or Tijuana. In this sense, data showed that U.S. education is still perceived as an equaliser in modern society with the capacity to grant upward social mobility.

Therefore, U.S. education, not Mexican, could grant better living conditions, including a safer or less violent environment, if relocating permanently to the U.S. in later adulthood. U.S. private or public schools located in the border stripe are aware of such an approach to U.S. education. On some occasions, such awareness can be detrimental for the pupils and effective teaching practices as English-only instructions are used as a business model.

U.S. private schools in Calexico have a strong focus on English language proficiency enforced by punitive systems, without considering the efficiency of such dynamics nor the academic progress of the pupils. For instance, pupils whose first language is English would also be punished if caught speaking Spanish at school. This evidence that the purpose of such punitive systems was directed to prevent Spanish speaking regardless of the English proficiency level of the pupil. Effective curricular teaching-learning pedagogies come second after English language proficiency and Spanish speaking prevention.

Based on the empirical data and still considering U.S. education as a social equaliser, the reasons for becoming transborder in the Cali-Baja region can be categorised in three types: i) to gain access to the U.S., ii) to remain in the U.S., and iii) as intergenerational family identity. It is important to underscore the figurative nature of the first two categories.

To gain access refers to learners that are generally the first in their families to be transborder. The narratives show how the families planned the transborder journey as a strategy to 'access' the U.S., aspiring for a better future for the children and sometimes, for the entire family. This strategy is planned and can take months or years to materialise. The tactics used for becoming transborder are heterogeneous, albeit all related to the parent's understanding of the benefits of the American dream, and of speaking English at a native level. One tactic is to provide U.S. nationality to the children. The narratives in this work reflect the importance posited by the parents on nationality when having the opportunity of giving birth in the U.S. However, this group then is subdivided into those who went to public or private schools. This division is important as the transborder experience becomes quite different since no American can access U.S. public education if residing abroad. The latter adds an extra level of difficulty to the already challenging dynamic.

Another tactic, as discussed, is the opportunity to get an F1 visa based on the parents' substantial proof of financial solvency. Data shows a direct link between F1 holders and the significance of learning English at a native level. The parents considered that to speak English as a native would grant better future job opportunities for their children in the U.S. or in a transnational context. It is in this sense that access to the U.S. can be through a passport or F1 visa, coupled with the assimilation of overarching U.S. sociocultural norms rendered by U.S. schools. However, to live and work on the Mexican side remained an alternative in such transborder understanding of the American dream.

The second category is to become transborder as a way to 'remain' in the U.S. This type is characterised by being forced into the practice with little planning by the parents and resulting from particular circumstances, mainly economic hardship in the U.S. Additionally, people in this category are U.S. nationals, being first or second generation of Mexican-Americans. The narratives by two

participants identify the commencement of their transborder journey when relocating to Baja California from California. In those cases, such relocation aimed to avoid deeper economic struggles or even homelessness in the U.S. Both of the families had migrated previously to the U.S., pursuing the American dream. Without much anticipation, they became transborder pupils to continue studying in the U.S. This type of forced transborderism then becomes a means to remain in the U.S. dynamics.

Lastly, the data showed a third category referring to transborderism as an intergenerational transferred family identity trait. Although only one participant shared that at least four generations in her family have been transborder, it does reveal an important inherited identity attached to transborderism. The interplay of intergenerational transferred transborderism sustained by the wish to access the U.S. can be observed in later generations in the Cali-Baja region as well. For instance, eight participants that are first or second generation transborderers, said it was a shared family practice referring primarily to siblings and cousins.

### II.III Northbound Border Crossing Through the PoE is the Most Difficult Challenge in the Transborder Dynamic

The data presented in Chapters IV and V confirms that crossing the border northbound, either to San Diego or Calexico, was the most challenging part of the transborder dynamic. This conclusion is based on the narratives of the participants explaining the hardship of crossing. All of them, 100%, underscored the extreme difficulties they had to endure daily when transiting the PoE. Furthermore, long waiting times were the emphasised element for such consideration. The land PoEs are one of at least two power structures transborder learners encounter and navigate. This demographic group experience intensively the effects of the U.S. political machinery in immigration and national security. Twenty-one participants were transborder subjects before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Nineteen continued being transborder pupils or students after the attack. That day, they were trapped on the U.S. side as the border closed unexpectedly. The narrative of one former transborder pupil explained how the killing of President John. F. Kennedy in 1963 generated the same political reaction, leaving her in Calexico until the border was opened again later that same day. These accounts demonstrate the significant effect political events have on the border without considering the different conditions of the population. The absence of protocol to assist transborder pupils or students in border closures, reaffirms political invisibility of this group, and the disconnection between national and local policies.

Furthermore, the political aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks was experienced on the border by the participants as waiting times increased at all PoEs in Tijuana-San Diego and Mexicali-Calexico. Before the terrorist attacks, the participants reported waiting in line for an average of twenty minutes in Mexicali and forty minutes in Tijuana. After 2001, those in Mexicali said the 'new normal' consisted of up to two hours. In the case of those crossing from Tijuana, it would take up to four hours per day. Moreover, new border rules and policies implemented on behalf of national

security and the war on terror, made Ports of Entry an even more hostile site. This was due to the effects of increased waiting times and a more aggressive behaviour of CBP officers towards border crossers. As a direct result, the data also shows the severe psychological effect these changes had on these learners. Stress, anxiety, nervousness, and fear were the most reported feelings when asked what they thought or felt when crossing the border. Such negative emotions and thoughts had repercussions on the mental health of some of the participants. In one case, the former transborder pupil developed acute anxiety and cannot cross the border today. She now lives in San Diego. In other cases, the fear of not being granted entry, missing classes, and losing scholarships increased their anxiety levels. To clarify, time control is an example of the type of power exercised by CBP at the border.

Moreover, violence is a constant element on the multiple Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego. In the case of those attending schools in Calexico, some pupils experienced racial slurs and discrimination at the PoEs. Furthermore, physical violence was experienced by those attending school in San Diego and Calexico at border checkpoints, including physical attacks by other border crossers complaining about the student lane. A recurrent comment by the participants was the harassment perpetrated by the CBP officers while crossing. Gender violence in the form of sexual harassment from CBP officers and other border crossers was also present in the narratives of the participants. A gender approach to border practices is also missing from traditional studies of the documented border crossings at the Mexico-U.S. border. A gender perspective is also missing when analysing transborder subjects.

The complicated dynamic of the PoEs after 2001 required the implementation of a specific lane for transborder pupils, reflecting the intersection of education and border practices. Although the lane helped reduce the waiting time at the PoEs in Calexico and San Diego, it added tension between the learners and the rest of the border crossers. The establishment of such a priority mechanism only considered one of the issues experienced at the PoE and deepened others, such as verbal aggression to transborder learners.

Furthermore, there was no difference in the dynamic during border crossings between those holding a U.S. passport or a visa. All participants experienced the same border crossing dynamics, fears, and anxieties but on a different scale. In this specific context, participants holding a U.S. passport expressed not feeling any different from those with a visa. By no means is it argued that U.S. nationals should have better treatment than Mexicans in any setting. However, the accounts serve to demonstrate the generalisation of practices without distinction including nationalities at the Mexico-U.S. border, in particular when crossing by land from the Mexican side.

To navigate such a difficult site, border hacks were created and implemented to cope with the assemblages of power deployed at these Ports of Entry. These in particular were related to waiting times and the violence experienced in this site. Eating breakfast, doing homework, and developing friendships were the activities highlighted to be conducted by the participants that helped them transit

the PoEs. This shows the multiple dynamics present in this site. The checkpoints are not only spaces for surveillance since relations of affection are also developed. Such counter-pedagogies not only helped them navigate the PoE but were part of their resilient and transborder identity that they still hold in adulthood.

The Land Ports of Entry discussed in this work had a broader significant effect on this population than anticipated regarding mental health issues, identity formation and resilience. To cross this non-place or space of exception requires extraordinary resilience from those who cross it often. Some expressions of transborderism, such as the discussed border hacks or counter-pedagogies, reflect the adaptive capacities of transborder learners. Checkpoints are also a place for production, affection, and inspiration. For these reasons, the analysis of the PoEs is critical for a deep understanding of transborderism, and of the Mexico-U.S. border. The next empirical finding analyses the U.S. education system as the second power structure that transborder learners navigate after transiting the PoE.

#### II.IV U.S. Education System is a Transborder Power Structure in the Cali-Baja Border

As stated, the reproduction of border practices was visible in different aspects of this demographic group. For instance, in schools and after school activities. The data showed that economic, social, and political asymmetries are also reproduced inside the classrooms, and in the overall school environment. One form of such reproduction is through mononational pedagogical practices and English language surveillance. This surveillance consisted of punishing those speaking in Spanish in school, even when the learners were bilingual with English as their first language.

The data also evidenced that pedagogies and teaching methods of schools located at the Cali-Baja border region were not adapted to the transborder reality of the learners. However, they understood the business dimension of it. Most of the participants said the school pedagogy did not include the other side of the border as a point of reference or as part of subject teaching. This means that teachers would not form any type of binational connections for learning purposes. This shows a disregard for a local reality to which transborder students could connect and use in school. Such disconnection mirrors practices at the Ports of Entry, for example, the disregard for transborder learners as part of the community, and additional forms of discrimination.

To cope with the hardship of the U.S. academic system and chosen teaching methods, the participants developed in-school hacks, a counter-pedagogy directed to navigate the U.S. school system as a transborder learner. To a great extent, such counter-pedagogies were shared and supported by peer-to-peer practices. The objective of these were to better school performances and minimise language-related punishments. In the case of three private schools located in Calexico and El Centro, California, language surveillance was a priority. For instance, school staff tried to control the pupils' language during lunch or breaks. If caught speaking Spanish, the pupils would be sent to detention or to Sunday school.

In public schools, in-school border hacks were created and performed to not disclose the pupil's place of residency. The data collected showed a series of performances and mechanisms created by the participants to protect personal information. This instruction was given by their parents. This affected social relations with peers, teachers, and overall with the school community. In this sense, the counter-pedagogy was less supported by peer-to-peer practices.

A limited parental involvement with school activities and academic development was also observed. Such involvement was contingent on the parent immigration document, and the level of English proficiency. Regarding the English language, 85% of the participants said their parents did not speak English to the level needed to help them with homework, or to communicate with the teachers. This reduced the capacity of parental guidance drastically, particularly with homework. In this sense, the role of the parents in the transborder process should also be taken into account to grasp the multiple adversities this dynamic pose on academic journeys. Parental involvement is paramount for better school performance in the U.S., as it was discussed.

Moreover, a group of participants in Tijuana commented they were enrolled as homeless pupils. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act grants access to public education to all homeless youth in the U.S. For this reason, some of the participants had to declare being homeless with all the risks this implies. Due to safeguarding protocols, teachers and school districts should contact state authorities if concerned with safety of a homeless child. For instance, low school performance is one of the indicators that a homeless child could need extra governmental support, such as being placed in foster homes. This could potentially affect transborder pupils and the entire family since they might have low school performance. The principal reasons for low performance in a transborder context are waking up as early as three in the morning, waiting in line for hours, and receiving limited academic support at school and at home, due to language barriers. Another challenge observed linked to homelessness was the feeling of 'being homeless' which was recurrent among the participants in Tijuana-San Diego that attended public schools. This notion was present even when not enrolled as homeless pupils. Such sentiment was related to the extended hours they spent outside their houses conducting activities in the U.S. after school. They expressed feeling like they were living in their car or in public spaces.

Based on the aforementioned findings, the analysis of transborder practices and implications provides an opportunity to rethink set notions of residency or homelessness based on the time spent on each side of the border. The majority of the participants in Tijuana-San Diego said to have spent more time in the U.S. than in Mexico. In the case of Mexicali-Calexico, the participants remembered spending just as much time on both sides with a few exceptions. Ultimately, transborder pupils and students can spend a considerable amount of time in the U.S. without holding any social security nor access to essential services, such as health. In this region, homelessness acquires a different dimension related to the absence of a permanent place in the country where transborder learners spend their time. In particular, such dimension refers to food and house insecurities in this context.

Furthermore, the data shows that practices pertaining to border protection or national security are also experienced inside a particular private school in Calexico. The participants who attend Calexico Mission School expressed witnessing and experiencing events related to border protection inside the school. They also witness drugs being thrown from Mexicali to the school backyard. U.S. CBP officers would also enter the school to investigate and chase undocumented immigrants. Public school staff were allowed to stand at the PoE, on the U.S. side, to check if any of the students crossed to Mexico after school, therefore, being a fraudulent learner. Additionally, CBP officers would inform public schools if any of their enrolled learners was caught crossing from Mexico during the morning. These examples evidence the intersections and liaison between school and CBP authorities. Traditionally, these structures operated independently. After 2001, these collaborate with each other to the detriment of the learners, even when the majority of them are U.S. nationals.

Additionally, community members in Calexico and San Diego saw the business opportunity of transborder learners. For instance, people living on the U.S. side would 'rent' a utility bill to comply with public school's entry requirements. These members would advertise the services and prices through Facebook groups. The fees can go as high as 100 U.S. dollars per month, per child.

The existence of this dynamic also shows that transborder practices for academic purposes are intertwined with the local community, and do not exist exclusively inside schools. This reveals the complexity of transborderism and its importance for the understanding of documented border processes at the Cali-Baja region.

As shown, the family and the community are involved in transborder practices for different reasons. Documented border crossings influence the overall economy of border towns, particularly on the U.S. side. As recounted in the first empirical chapters, closing the border represent millions of dollars of economic loss. For the discussed reasons, the challenges faced by transborder pupils and students are part of a transborder fabric that includes the family, the Port of Entry, U.S. CBP officers, school authorities, and community members. Therefore, the governmental and policy response to such challenges should be integral and multi-level.

## II.V Transborder Practices Adapt to Different Contexts Within the Same Region

The novel inter-city analysis of transborder practices between Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego shows how shared challenges are faced differently by transborder subjects. Initially, results indicate that transborderism is experienced differently in Tijuana-San Diego than in Mexicali-Calexico. There are several reasons for such a premise. First, Mexicali and Calexico experience less economic asymmetry and racial differences than Tijuana-San Diego. Mexicali and Calexico are also less populated, which means that border issues can happen at a smaller scale. Another factor is the urban layout. Calexico being a small city, the students and pupils were able to walk to school in some cases, whilst those in San Diego had to commute for a longer time using public transportation or private car. However, those in Mexicali and Calexico had to endure the extreme temperatures of the arid area that can go up to fifty degrees Celsius during the summer, making them seek shelter

or water in local shops. This was only observed in the narratives of those from Mexicali-Calexico, entailing a more significant and direct interaction between the local community and transborder pupils, as they would visit the same friendly shops every day.

Additionally, after school surveillance to transborder learners were only observed in the Mexicali-Calexico case. Such mechanism is possible due to the amount of schools and learners crossing through this border. In Tijuana-San Diego, it would be almost an impossible task. In this sense, surveillance by public schools is conducted differently within the region, affecting the transborder dynamic of the pupils. In this case, the learners would need to wait in shops until the school staff member was done with the check at the PoE. This additional dynamic was only observed in Mexicali-San Diego.

However, psychological, physical and gender violence, were present in all cities. The narratives of the hardship of northbound crossing through the PoE coincide as well. The exercise of power by the U.S. CBP officers to the detriment of their wellbeing is also present on all the narratives. Negative emotions related to fear and anxiety while crossing are present as well throughout the region. Moreover, positive feelings such as interacting with friends, eating or doing homework at the PoEs, were part of the narratives of all the learners. Furthermore, 100% of the participants stated that waiting time at the border was the most challenging element of their entire transborder life. This is regardless of the amount of time waited, through what lane, by foot or car, or city.

Overall, an inter-city comparison and analysis is not for determining in which city transborderism is more complicated to practice, but rather to understand it as a changing process, reflecting on the differences between borders and the way people enact transborderism under specific conditions. To observe differences and similarities of these dynamics in two different cities within the same region adds depth to the understanding of transborderism. Additionally, it shows the way it is understood by transborderers and the policy implications per city. Overall, the empirical data helps us to further emergent scholarship in transborderism.

### **III. Contributions to Transborderism Scholarship**

This research analyses the practices and the intricate fabric that constitutes transborderism via the figure of transborder pupils and students. The significance of the empirical findings broadens our understanding of transborderism and the actors involved in this dynamic. With this information it is possible to reflect on the limitations observed on the traditional approaches to the Mexico-U.S. border, and on the scholarship that discusses transborderism.

It is in this sense that a brief recapitulation of transborderism scholarship is pertinent. Iglesias Prieto (2011) referred to border practices and the meanings attached to them as 'borderisms'. She has categorised such practices in four types of borderisms ranging from not acknowledging the existence of the border, passing through the normalisation of it as a line that divides, to most intense interactions that understand the border as a third condition (Iglesias Prieto, N. 2011, 2015). In other words, borderisms are conceptual approaches, meanings, practices, and identities,



depicting different dynamics in the Mexico-U.S. border region. Furthermore, borderisms can overlap. Within each borderism, particular positionalities exist regarding 'the other' and 'the other side'. Such positionalities will depend on the subjectivities, activities, interactions, and frequency of crossing of each individual. The fourth borderism is called 'Transborder' referring to an integrated space composed by both sides of the border, including its conflicts and tensions. People under this category have deep, intense, emotional, and engaged relationships on both border cities making them bicultural/multicultural and bilingual. (Iglesias Prieto, N., 2018).

In this vein, Laura Velasco and Oscar Contreras (2014) developed a typology for the geopolitical border based on crossing experiences. The five types of crossing experiences include those documented and undocumented. The term transborderism is not used, but the authors present a category named the 'Everyday Border', referring to those experiences where border crossing is essential for someone's livelihood. Commuters are included in this category. The authors correctly highlight the importance for such a population to have specific cultural skills, the ability to navigate social norms, and the role of English language proficiency. However, pupils and students were not explicitly mentioned.

Another effort to approach and understand highly connected border practices was made by José Manuel Valenzuela (2014), referring to 'Transborder Habitus' as a sociocultural interstice allowing for 'practices and collective transborder interpretations' (Valenzuela, M., 2014:28). Drawing from Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of camps and habitus, Valenzuela's transborder habitus refers to the structures that create systems of understanding stemming from practices conducted on both sides of the border, such as studying. The habitus produces a collective lifestyle or routine only understandable from a transborder perspective, from within. In this sense, Valenzuela proposes transborder scopes referring to the processes and signifiers that involve the people in transborder camps and habitus, and their practices. Transborder scopes also include socialised power structures and capitals from a Bourdieusian perspective. In this context, transborderism refers to the personal, social, cultural, and political processes occurring across both sides of the border that could only be understood from within.

The current transborderism scholarship does mention learners as part of the overall transborder population. However, they have not been the main focus of research. To look at transborderism through this subgroup of learners contributes theoretically for the following reasons: i) it helps with the historicization of the process and its limits, ii) it highlights the implications of simultaneous navigation of national and international power structures, iii) it emphasizes the adaptability of transborder practices, iv) it underscores the importance of counter-pedagogies and v) it determines the transferability of transborderism to different fields, such as policymaking.

Transborderism today is mainly understood as a contemporary process product of globalisation in the border setting. Although tensions, asymmetries, and colonial genealogies between Mexico and the U.S. are discussed to a certain extent in the form of dynamics from within and ways of understanding the lived border, an exercise of historicization of transborderism in the Cali-Baja region is missing. Based on the Bath Riots episode in Texas, it is possible to trace transborder practices and commuters back in 1917. This research provides an account of

transborder practices present in Mexicali-Calexico around 1917–1920 when these cities were founded and only a small obelisk and a checkpoint marked the international border. Hence, transborderism at the Cali-Baja region is not the product of contemporary global dynamics via local processes, rather it is the product of geopolitical border establishment with intense circular societal interactions across power structures. Such information not only determines the rough beginning of transborder practices in this region but also informs the possible future of transborderism. In this sense, transborder practices can commence and continue to exist regardless of the thickness, expression, and extension of the border barrier. Such information is also relevant for the analysis of the limits of transborderism and its practices in the future, and in areas where physical geopolitical borders have been externalised but with remaining international power structures in place.

Transborderism in the Cali-Baja region also consist of the simultaneous navigation of domestic and international power structures. In the context of this research, the power structures refer to border crossing through the U.S. Port of Entry, and the education system. The former power structure is expressed through implemented state policies oriented to border protection and management of documented border crossers. This power structure changed from geopolitical and sovereignty demarcation, to a key element of U.S. national security. The U.S. education system is the second power structure these learner's transit. Just as the PoE, the education system via the pedagogies used inside the schools of Calexico and San Diego, is determined by state policies with nationalistic objectives. Such teaching methods and objectives relate to border-oriented power and modes of control. For instance, the language surveillance, hidden identity, and in-school hacks, are related to a transborder life that integrates less valued sociocultural elements and identities connected to 'the other side'. However, the accounts in this research show how transborder practices have influenced and resisted these structures. It is in this sense that to integrate the navigation of power structures into transborderism allows us to look at the places and sites where intense manifestations of such structures influence transborder practices, and vice versa.

Additionally, Transborderism is a process and dynamic with adaptive capacities. This research shows the way that transborderism and its practices are reproduced adapting to sociopolitical and cultural (re)contextualisations, and to different urban layouts. The inter-city analysis put forward in this work shows the way the community in Calexico is more involved with the transborder dynamic of pupils than the community in San Diego. The main reason for such a difference is the urban layout of Calexico and the schools' locations. In this city, the pupils walk across the main streets interacting with people in the shops, and different community members. In contrast, the pupils in San Diego would normally get on public transportation right after crossing the PoE since the schools are located far away from the border. Therefore, in Calexico, the role of the community is more prominent in the transborder practice ranging from established methods for providing proof of address to refuge providers for transborder pupils.

To look at transborderism through the figure of transborder pupils and students adds consistency to subjects and their theoretical understanding. By discussing the empirical enactment of transborderism through particular subjects in different cities within the same region, this work

reflected on the elements of transborderism, its limitations, differences, challenges and implications. One of the most critical elements when analysing transborderism is the role of time. The effects of time compression and elongation on transborder dynamics influence the perception of the process. Time management at the PoE is used as a political tactic of deterrence making waiting times quite challenging. Northbound border crossing is the most difficult part of being transborder for this reason. In contrast, crossing southbound was not the main concern as this process was faster. In this sense, the hardship of transborderism is perceived differently within transborderers depending on the elements of time, direction, and commuting distances. Pedagogies and counter-pedagogies are then developed to cope with northbound border crossing.

Transborderism produces, reproduces, and involves empirical counter-pedagogies to navigate the Ports of Entry and the U.S education system. Border crossing is a performative process to reduce the possibilities of being denied access to the U.S. Practical counter-pedagogies are transmitted from generation to generation and among community members. For instance, parents instruct their children on how to behave and interact with CBP officers. Transborder learners develop border hacks to cope with the hardship of waiting times and commuting. In-school hacks are also enacted by this population when navigating the education system with language-related punitive mechanisms.

Lastly, this research also acknowledges the transferability component of transborderism to the policy field. In this vein, transborderism does not only belong in the intersection of sociology and cultural studies as it can be practiced as a perspective in policy-making. This perspective would still keep the border territorialised and is different to transnational policies. In the case of education, such a transborder perspective departs from the state acknowledgment of co-responsibility over the transborder population. This acknowledgment entails the institutional visibility of this population, integrating the PoE as a place with safeguarding concerns, highlighting the vulnerabilities transborder pupils faced, the need to include the different power structures transborder navigate, and determine transborder policies. Such transborder policies would need to have a deep and complex understanding of both side of the border, would need to be multicultural and bilingual, understanding the transborder learners as shared by Mexico and California, with dynamics that could only be understood from within. In this sense, transborder policies should be empirically informed by the transborder community to fully understand the components of the transborder fabric including shared emotions, anxieties, and how transborderism is lived. The challenges of transborder practices represent a binational concern as it affects school performances and the wellbeing of learners that belong to both sides of the border. The following section presents the practical policy recommendations to support transborder pupils and students in this particular geographical space.

#### **IV. Policy Recommendations: Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share**

The data and findings of this research have several implications for future scholarship and policy development concerning the Cali-Baja region. It is important to keep researching transborder practices to address and mitigate the most urgent matters related to health, education, and safety. In this sense, specific empirically based recommendations are presented proposing the development and signing of a Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share. That is, a binational instrument of cooperation in education between Mexico and California based on empirical and qualitative information, and not just on quantitative data. This recommendation abides by the current Mexico-U.S. framework in education to make it governmentally feasible. This binational framework of cooperation grants the opportunity for stakeholders to further the binational collaboration on transnational education, and to develop specific programmes for transborder learners. This aspect is paramount as it sets the legal grounds for high-level negotiations to commence on specific topics of concern. In other words, without the existing binational framework, it would not be possible to propose a Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share between Mexico and California. In such a case, an overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would be needed first to allow further agreements on specific topics such as transborder learners. Nevertheless, the MoU 'Students We Share' signed in 2018 by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education, the California Department of Education, and the Regents of the University of California, already grants the opportunity to further institutionalised actions. So far, this MoU only refers to transnational students transiting between Mexican and U.S. education systems, however, it does not include transborder learners.

Additionally, the empirical data analysed in this research should serve as the qualitative information for such a Specific Agreement. To be precise, three elements are needed for making the proposed Specific Agreement feasible, i) a binational framework that allows for such conversations to commence which is already granted by the 2018 MoU, ii) the qualitative information on transborder pupils and students transiting between Mexico and California that the present research provides, and iii) political will which is observable among the stakeholders based on the latest institutional interactions.

Traditionally, Mexico-U.S. cooperation in education was focused on transnational education and learners residing permanently in the U.S., regardless of the immigration status. The Directorate General of International Relations within the Mexican Secretariat for Public Education holds a robust framework of binational cooperation with the U.S. To date, more than twenty instruments (DGRI, 2019) reflect the close work and relations in this sector. Due to the public administration guidelines of the U.S., some of those instruments are held between the Mexican Federal Government by the Secretariat of Public Education through such Directorate, and U.S. State Departments of Education. These State-state relations show an element of adaptability in the schemes, topics, and modalities of international cooperation. The variety of programmes, activities, and instruments for collaboration

also show the concern for Mexican immigrant students in the U.S. For instance, the Binational Program for Migrant Education (PROBEM by its acronym in Spanish) was established in 1982 and is still running. This transversal and multi-level programme is possible with the annual effort of Mexican states, the selected teachers, and U.S. school districts. The programme runs with the coordination and facilitation of the Directorate General of International Relations and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. More than 46,000 Mexican transnational students in the U.S. have benefited from the programme that consists of placements for Mexican teachers in U.S. schools for several weeks.

Yet, no programme nor instrument of binational cooperation had been designed for Mexican immigrant pupils or students returning to Mexico. From 2005 to 2010, between one to 1.4 million people returned to Mexico (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2016, Giorguli, S. and Gutiérrez E., 2012) in a process called the Great Expulsion by Víctor Zúñiga (2019). School-age children were included in such a process. The Mexican education system was not prepared nor equipped to grant them fair access to education. Entry requirements, language barriers, and social discrimination are some of the challenges these children are still facing. In response, the University of California established a programme called 'The Students We Share' to address and mitigate such barriers by bringing into dialogue Californian education authorities, Mexican local and federal authorities, institutions, civil society organisations, and academia.

As a result, the Binational Summit 'Education Beyond Borders: Mexico-California' was celebrated in June 2017 in Mexico City. The Summit took place throughout three days of intense work and dialogue intending to determine the further lines of action. The Summit outcome was the negotiation of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Secretariat of Public Education, the California Department of Education, and the Regents of the University of California, signed in May 2018 during the first Mexican Binational Week of Education in the U.S.

To analyse this MoU is relevant for this research for the following reasons: i) it shows the adaptive capacities of both governments in education and human mobility, and ii) it introduces the notion of 'the students we share' entailing co-responsibility over the education of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans transiting between California and Mexico. This new understanding of the different panorama of pupils and students migrating from the U.S. to Mexico was also reflected in several processes. For instance, Mexican laws in education were modified to grant access to education by reducing the enrolment documentation required and certifying technical knowledge acquired in the U.S. Such flexibility reflected a better understanding of the Mexican reconfigured demography in schools and universities.

Furthermore, the notion of 'the students we share' was essential for the signing of such MoU. The objective of this MoU, established in article one, states that it will benefit K-12 students, and teachers in Mexico and California. Article two describes the activities of collaboration that should be conducted by the parties involved. Subsection 'h' establishes the capacity for the parties to develop additional activities if determined applicable. In other words, an instrument of cooperation with specific activities can be developed and signed within the scope of this MoU. I claim that transborder pupils

and students at the Cali-Baja region are also students that Mexico and California share. Thus, they should be included in binational instruments for cooperation that can improve academic conditions, school performance, and border commute practices. Through this MoU, Mexico and California adopted a circular perspective in education that was missing in the binational approaches focused on Mexican programmes in the U.S. Today, the binational framework in education already provides the governmental tools to develop an institutionalised transborder perspective and approach.

This research does not call for governmental efforts alone to address the challenges of such a population. Instead, it calls for a closer dialogue with local authorities, teachers, pupils, students, parents, and institutions on both sides of the border supported by Mexico and California governments, and the participation of the University of California. Such integral dialogue will help develop adequate policies and prevent policy evaporation. What is urgently needed is a stronger political will to acknowledge transborder practices on the binational framework in education between Mexico and California. To approach the Cali-Baja border from a transborder perspective will finally portray the complex border reality that has always existed, but furthering its understanding.

In light of the above, the following recommendations aim to improve the integral academic formation of this demographic population. By identifying and analysing the MoU signed in 2018, it was possible to develop feasible and applicable recommendations considering the governmental capacities to implement a new binational instrument in education. The four recommendations are: The Signing of a Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share, a Mexican Consular Protection Campaign, Adapted Infrastructures at the land Ports of Entry of Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-San Diego and, Develop Protocols for Sudden Border Closures at the Cali-Baja Region.

### **1. The Signing of an ‘Specific Agreement for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share’**

The Specific Agreement should derive from the Memorandum of Understanding Entered into by The California Department of Education and The Regents of the University of California, and the Secretary of Public Education of the United Mexican States, signed in 2018. Article three of this Memorandum of Understanding establishes the capacity of The Parties to develop cooperative agreements that will delineate specific activities, actions, programmes, projects, and other forms of cooperation to be completed and implemented. This article furthermore specifies that all cooperative agreements will become part of such a Memorandum of Understanding. To be clear, the Specific Agreement is a different international instrument of cooperation than the Memorandum of Understanding. However, the Memorandum provides the overarching binational framework for the Specific Agreement to be developed under the premise that transborder pupils and students can be included as part of the population considered in ‘Students We Share’.

The development of the ‘Specific Agreement of Cooperation for Transborder Pupils and Students We Share’ will recognise the spirit of cooperation and benefit the establishment of mechanisms for collaboration in the area of education. Furthermore, it will be under the observance of the addendum for school districts in the Memoranda of Understanding relating to education

between Mexico and the United States signed on 8 August 1990, and its Appendix X, signed on 21 July 2016 and on 22 July 2016, respectively.

The Specific Agreement should establish appropriate mechanisms that contribute to the integral academic formation of pupils and students, and teachers in the states of Baja California and California. For this purpose, some of the initial collaborative activities should be the following:

- a) **To Develop Adapted Mechanisms in Schools:** Private schools located in Calexico and San Diego should have differentiated mechanisms for pupils and students crossing the border. For instance, extended grace periods during the morning. This would grant them fair access to education based on the specific practice and the challenges they face. To assume all of the pupils come from the same background and share a similar life process is to deny the local reality of the border and the heterogeneity of the local community.
- b) **To Enhance and Promote the Use of Technology:** Technological platforms should be used extensively in schools with transborder pupils and students. This would help with their academic progress without interruptions due to political events. For instance, homework submission and participation could also be done through a Virtual Learning Environment. This is not intended to substitute face to face classes but as a contingent mechanism guaranteeing access to education in an adapted form. Also, bilingual virtual forums for teachers and parents should be created. This will foster a closer community among teachers, students, and parents, and function as a communication channel whenever the border cannot be crossed. The border crossing restrictions by the COVID-19 outbreak evidence the need of such additional teaching-learning spaces. Moreover, this will benefit all pupils and students regardless of their place of residency.
- c) **To Develop a Transborder Pedagogy:** This type of pedagogy should consist of connecting both communities via school activities and teaching practices. This can also be implemented in English as a Second Language modality in border schools. All efforts would contribute to enhancing the value of being bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate via connecting communities, and underscoring the importance of their heterogeneity. Teachers, scholars, and pedagogy experts located in the Cali-Baja border should develop such pedagogy.
- d) **Training for Parents and Teachers:** One element for developing an appropriate transborder pedagogy is conducting parents and teachers training that includes the familiarisation with both sides of the border. This could be done virtually and include discussions underscoring essential elements of the cities and cultures. This will help the teachers in the U.S. to make connections with the community and local practices as part of the local pedagogy. The parents will also benefit from knowing the type of pedagogy and sociocultural practices the children are experiencing inside the schools. Overall the connections between teachers-parents-community-local dynamics will benefit the pupils and students as it will reflect important elements of the transborder life that are usually missing.
- e) **To Jointly Promote Research on Transborderism:** conferences and forums should be organised to analyse and discuss transborderism and transborder practices, as well as its influences on children in formative stages. This would contribute to further the conversation and

understanding of such practice in the Cali-Baja region and the University of California could be the leader of this endeavour. Furthermore, it would inform the construction of a transborder perspective that would help rethinking the border and forward transborder governance.

This work also acknowledges the possibility of the enlisted collaboration activities being conducted outside of an official instrument for cooperation by each stakeholder. Local authorities, civil organisations, academic communities and institutions, can implement and adapt these proposals as necessary. However, Mexican and U.S. authorities need to recognise the challenges of this population and effectively develop mechanisms to mitigate some of the most urgent matters. It is in this sense the Mexican Secretariat for Foreign Affairs via the Mexican Institute for Mexicans Abroad, and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection should be included in the dialogue in transborderism and education. The following recommendations are complementary to each other but could also be implemented unilaterally. Moreover, a closer dialogue between governmental identities would be optimal for the integral safeguarding of transborder pupils in particular.

## **2. Mexican Consular Protection Campaign**

This proposal of a campaign from the Mexican government via its consulates in Calexico and San Diego should specifically speak to transborder population including learners. One of the objectives should be to officially integrate them into the federal protection programmes of Mexicans abroad. Regardless of the place of residency, once on the U.S. side they are subjects of concern and should be assisted by Mexican authorities if needed. Some of the protection they could provide can be related to human rights violations, advisory on health, education, and financial education. Such services are already provided in the Mexican consulates to Mexicans living in the U.S. However, the campaign could be directed and adapted for transborder pupils and students. This would be an important step towards recognising transborder people as part of the Mexican and U.S. population with both governments accountable for their condition.

## **3. Adapted Infrastructure at the Land Ports of Entry in Mexicali-Calexico and Tijuana-SanDiego, Conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection**

The development of infrastructure at the Ports of Entry in Mexicali and Tijuana have to consider the violence suffered by transborder pupils and students when crossing northbound. Therefore, it is advisable to establish a specific line separated from the sight of other border crossers. This could be done only during the busiest times of border crossings during the mornings avoiding the need to physically construct an additional checkpoint. This would require creativity from CBP as the space is limited, but any separation between the pupils and the general public would reduce the amount of verbal and physical aggression they received. It would also reduce gender harassment and provide them with a sense of safety when crossing.



#### **4. Develop a Protocol for Sudden Border Closures at the Cali-Baja Region**

Unexpected political events can result in border closures as has happened several times. For example, in 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and in 2001 during the World Trade Center terrorist attacks. On both occasions sudden border closures left transborder learners on the U.S. side unaccompanied and without any protection, and full of uncertainty. A recent example of border closures is the ongoing one due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Such restrictions have lasted over a year. Students were considered essential travellers by U.S. immigration authorities granting them entrance to the U.S. However, family members could not accompany them if not considered essential travellers, that is, to have a passport or a working permit. Thus, a significant number of minors are forced to remain unaccompanied when crossing the border. To this date, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has not developed a protocol regarding transborder population that includes unaccompanied minors stranded in U.S. territory due to sudden border closures. This is an urgent matter for both governments to address as it deeply affects the minors, the families, the schools, and the community. The inexistence of these protocols is indicative of the disregarding of transborder population as part of the Mexico-U.S. border ecology.

#### **V. Closing Remarks**

Since I started this project at the end of 2017, several events have impacted the Mexico-U.S. border. The two most controversial ones causing border closures were the Central American Migrant Caravan and the COVID-19 outbreak. Before 2020, the already harsh crossing dynamics at this border were those implemented after the terrorist attacks of 2001. However, there is a new border reality. To the moment of this writing, the border has been closed for over a year which had no precedent. For the first time, most of the documented border crossers living in Mexicali or Tijuana could not cross to the U.S., disrupting the local way of life enormously.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and international travel restrictions, the border's porosity was reduced to the minimum but sustained by its economic interdependence and transborder people. New border mechanisms should be of interest for scholars looking at the different ways that borderlands adapt and interact especially in front of adversities. For example, binational people that did not cross the border as much pre-COVID-19 became commuters during the outbreak, crossing goods or seeking health attention on the Mexican side. In other words, new transborder micro-businesses arose crossing goods per request to Mexicali and Tijuana (Meneses, M., 2021). Some others seeking private medical attention crossed the border southbound in the hope of finding hospital availability as California was deeply impacted by the pandemic.

Such extended border closures or travel restrictions do not reflect the general interconnectedness of the adjacent communities, but rather reflect the state power and the prevalence of border enforcement policies in the region. For instance, only people studying, residing or working in the U.S. were able to cross the border through land Ports of Entry. In contrast,

all Mexicans with a visa could fly over the border and enter U.S. territory. The reasons for closing land Ports of Entry are inconsistent compared to the rules for entrance at U.S. airports. Such inconsistency depicts a preponderant U.S. political view of the Mexico-U.S. border as a line to be defended and secured in times of adversity. In contrast, Mexico did not limit the entrance of tourists to its territory by land or air. Only sanitary checkpoints were established on the Mexican side of border crossing ports.

In this panorama, transborder pupils and students navigate both countries with a pandemic added to their daily concerns. Transborder learners were considered essential travellers since August 2020. However, if their parents are not U.S. residents or workers, they could not cross the border. This automatically affects pupils as they continue to be unaccompanied minors. Moreover, parental presence inside border schools is also limited by the same travel restrictions. This policy reflects the narrow understanding of the conditions of transborder learners that has been prevalent in the Cali-Baja region. The current situation is also an opportunity to develop border protocols specifically addressing transborder pupils and students to support their wellbeing and school performances. Their condition as learners is only half visible when allowed entrance to the U.S. but completely disregarded in relation to the vulnerabilities and insecurities endured on their overall dynamic. It will be up to Mexico-U.S. border scholars and policymakers to develop appropriate programmes, understandings, and approaches that effectively reflect border realities, challenges, and advantages. I am confident that this research contributes to such an endeavour.

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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ENTERED INTO BY THE CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA, AND THE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION OF THE UNITED  
MEXICAN STATES**

The State of California Department of Education (CDE) and the Regents of the University of California (UC) of the United States of America and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) of the United States of Mexico, hereafter referred to as "THE PARTIES;"

**Considering** that the CDE is a state agency under the management and direction of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), which is authorized to superintend the schools of the State of California;

**Recognizing** that the UC is governed by the Regents, which under Article IX, Section 9 of the California Constitution has "full powers of organization and governance" subject only to very specific areas of legislative control. The article states that "the University shall be entirely independent of all political and sectarian influence and kept free therefrom in the appointment of its Regents and in the administration of its affairs;"

**Considering** that the SEP is interested in deepening and strengthening the ties of friendship and cooperation with the UC and the CDE to carryout activities that benefit students travelling between the Mexican and Californian education systems;

**Recognizing** that **THE PARTIES** in signing this Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") want to establish mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation in the area of education, and to share experiences as they relate to the "Students We Share";

**Recognizing** that this MOU is based on a spirit of mutual cooperation and benefit;

**TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION** the terms of the addendum for school districts in the MOU related to the education exchange between the Government of the United Mexican States and the Government of the United States of America signed on August 8, 1990; and its Appendix X, signed on July 21–22, 2016.

**ARTICLE ONE:  
PURPOSE**

The objective of this MOU is for **THE PARTIES** to develop activities of mutual interest and benefit that contribute to the integral formation, attention, and development of K–twelfth grade students, as well as training of teachers in the United States of Mexico and the State of California.

**ARTICLE TWO:  
COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES**

**THE PARTIES** intend to develop the following collaborative activities of this MOU to meet the objectives:

- a) Organize and promote activities and teaching and academic projects (education and research) in areas of mutual interest that address the needs of students and teachers of the Students We Share.
- b) Organize conferences, symposia, forums, exhibitions and joint seminars, forums, in areas of mutual interest.
- c) Create a bilateral workgroup, consisting of officials from the SEP, CDE, and UC, who will collaborate and oversee the timely follow-up on agreements resulting from this collaboration.
- d) Promote linkages and collaboration among other associations and institutions.
- e) Promote and exchange best practices in the field of education between Mexico and the State of California.
- f) Facilitate mutually beneficial communication and collaborations with the private sector.
- g) Share the dissemination and promotion of activities, programs and materials generated from this joint collaboration.
- h) And any additional activity determined applicable by **THE PARTIES**.

**ARTICLE THREE:  
SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS OF COOPERATION**

**THE PARTIES** may develop specific cooperative agreements that will delineate the specific actions and academic projects to be completed, and identify the necessary financial resources for implementation. When signed, these specific agreements will become part of the present MOU.

**ARTICLE FOUR:  
FINANCING**

Each of **THE PARTIES** shall bear its own costs for participating in the collaborations to be carried out under this MOU.

**THE PARTIES** understand that costs incurred in connection with the cooperation activities set forth in a separate agreement, will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, pursuant to national and state laws and budget availability. If considered appropriate, and as long as **THE PARTIES** decide on these beforehand in writing, alternative financing mechanisms may be used for specific activities.

This MOU does not require the allocation or transfer of funds, goods, or any other resource in support of projects or activities previously described, except for those agreed by **THE PARTIES**.

**ARTICLE FIVE:  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

**THE PARTIES** agree that the intellectual property rights that may be generated from these activities will be protected in compliance with the applicable provisions of Federal legislation and international conventions of which the State of California in the United States of America and the United Mexican States belong.

Intellectual recognition will be granted to those who have participated in the execution of cooperation activities, as determined by the applicable Federal legislation.

All materials generated and published as a result of this collaboration will include the official logos of each of **THE PARTIES**, following **THE PARTIES** written approval of the materials.

**ARTICLE SIX:  
DESIGNATED PERSONNEL**

The personnel designated by each of **THE PARTIES** to carry out the activities under the present MOU should continue to be considered exclusive employees of each institution: Hence, no labor relations shall be created, by that employee(s), with any other **PARTY** and in no case should any **PARTY** be considered a substitute employee.

**ARTICLE SEVEN:  
LIABILITY**

**THE PARTIES** will have no liability or claim for any damages of any kind arising out of or in connection with this MOU.

With regard to any specific agreements entered into by the **PARTIES**, **THE PARTIES** will have no liability or claim for any damages that might occur as a result of unexpected, unforeseen events, such as an academic or administrative strike or an act of God. It is understood that once the unforeseen event has ceased, **THE PARTIES** will resume the activities in the manner they were established.

**ARTICLE EIGHT:  
RESPONSIBLE PARTIES**

For the adequate development of the activities set forth in the present MOU, each **PARTY** shall designate a responsible person or persons:

**CDE:**

Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
1430 N Street  
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Phone: 916-319-0800  
E-mail: [ttorlakson@cde.ca.gov](mailto:ttorlakson@cde.ca.gov)  
Website: [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)

**UC:**

Kim A. Wilcox, Chancellor  
University of California, Riverside  
Executive Sponsor, UC-Mexico Initiative  
4108 Hinderaker Hall,  
Riverside, CA 92521 USA  
Phone: 951.827.5102  
Email: [chancellor@ucr.edu](mailto:chancellor@ucr.edu)

**SEP**

Benito Mirón, Director General of International Relations  
República de Argentina #28,  
Centro Histórico, Ciudad de México. C.P. 06020  
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Email: [benito.miron@nube.sep.gob.mx](mailto:benito.miron@nube.sep.gob.mx)

**ARTICLE NINE:  
SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES**

Whatever controversy that derives from the interpretation or implementation of this MOU will be resolved in mutual accord among **THE PARTIES**.

**ARTICLE TEN:  
TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT**

The present MOU will become effective upon the date of its signing and shall remain effective for five (5) years. It can be renewed by mutual consent of **THE PARTIES**. The present MOU may be terminated at any time by a written notification upon 90 (ninety) days' notice.



The termination of this MOU should not affect the conclusion of the cooperation activities that may have been formalized in Specific Agreements during the term of this MOU, unless otherwise decided by **THE PARTIES**.

**ARTICLE ELEVEN:  
MODIFICATIONS**

This MOU may be modified at any time, upon the mutual written consent of **THE PARTIES IN WITNESS WHEREOF** the duly authorized officers of **THE PARTIES** have executed and delivered this MOU in triplicate, in English and Spanish both versions being equally valid.

**FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

[Redacted Signature Box]

Tom Torlakson  
Superintendent

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR THE SECRETARÍA DE EDUCACIÓN  
PÚBLICA OF THE UNITED STATES OF  
MEXICO**

[Redacted Signature Box]

Benito Mirón López  
Director General of International Relations

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR THE REGENTS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

[Redacted Signature Box]

Kim A. Wilcox  
Chancellor, UC Riverside  
Executive Sponsor, UC-Mexico  
Initiative

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_