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Transborder Identity Development: A Photovoice Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of
Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education at the San Diego-Tijuana

Border Region

By

Vannessa Falcón Orta

Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University

2021

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Approval of Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Vanessa Falcón Orta as fulfilling the scope and quality for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

Transborder Identity Development: A Photovoice Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of
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Border Region

By

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Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University: 2021

The purpose of this photovoice constructivist grounded theory study is to illustrate the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities. To generate the findings of this study, I conducted 11 photovoice focus groups and 20 one-on-one photovoice interviews in three grounded theory data collection and analysis phases, consisting of 691 photos with 32 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity are illustrated in a model grounded by the thoughts, feelings, and experiences participants shared about their academic trajectories, transborder performances and salient social identities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transborder identity is defined by five in-vivo themes representing the meanings Transfronterizx students ascribed to themselves in relationship to others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands: (1) “We Speak English, We Speak Spanish, We Speak Spanglish,” (2) “Soy De Aquí y Soy de Allá,” (3) “Building Bridges, Not Walls,” (4) “We Have to Adapt to Live in

these Situations,” and (5) “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante.” The findings also illustrate the current realities lived by Transfronterizx students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Implications for future research, practice and policy centered on fostering the development and success of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region are addressed.

Key terms: Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education, Photovoice, Constructivist Grounded Theory, Intersectionality, Identity Development, Student Development in Postsecondary and Higher Education, U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family: Alicia Orta Falcón (mother), Carlos E. Falcón (father) and Karlos Falcón Orta (brother); to my community at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) and the BorderClick program; and to the future Transfronterizx youth who will continue to build bridges, solidarity, inclusion and validation for one another and vulnerable communities at the San Diego-Tijuana border region and along the U.S.- Mexico borderlands.

Acknowledgements

The systems were not designed for me to reach this level of education. I would not be here today, writing the acknowledgements for my dissertation, if it were not for the support of my family, community and mentors. To get to where I am today was not an easy journey, but I don't think I would have been able to live between two different nations, cultures and societies, crossing a highly policed and militarized border every day while balancing academic responsibilities, work and civic leadership; if it were not for my family's love, encouragement and support. I am grateful to my mother, Alicia Orta Falcón; my father, Carlos E. Falcón; and my brother, Karlos Falcón Orta, for thriving, growing and persisting with me in an environment that was never made for us.

I am also grateful to my community at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) and the BorderClick program, for supporting my passion towards the social justice of Transfronterizx students. As Transfronterizx students, together we have created safe spaces of inclusion, community and cultural validation through Transfronterizx student-led change initiatives, igniting a movement for the social justice of Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. In turn, these organizations have also become spaces of transformational leadership and inclusion for me as a Transfronteriza.

I am grateful to my mentors and dissertation advisors: co-chair, Dr. Frank Harris III and committee member, Dr. Marva Capello, for providing me with their guidance and support in this dissertation study and throughout my doctoral studies trajectory. Beyond advising, many times they have opened their research labs, centers and office doors for my community and me to organize spaces of inclusion and cultural validation for Transfronterizx students. These spaces were of immense support, especially during the inception of our grassroots student-led change

initiatives for the social justice of Transfronterizx students. I am also grateful to my dissertation co-chair, Dr. William Perez and my dissertation committee member, Dr. Dina Maramba, for their brilliance and guidance in this dissertation study.

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CHAPTER 1: POSITIONALITY, BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Positionality

Hand-in-hand with my research is organizing safe spaces of inclusion, cultural validation, community, empowerment and social justice for Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana border region and along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.

My Transborder Beginnings

I am Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands; and I am the daughter of working-class immigrant parents from Mexico and Peru. I was born in Los Angeles, CA, and at a young age, my family and I moved to the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands due to poverty and housing insecurities, that led us to pursue a lower cost of living in Mexico, as we continued to hold ties in the U.S. by working and going to school in San Diego, CA. While living in both nations —The U.S. and Mexico, I grew up crossing the San Ysidro International Port of Entry every day.

Despite my family's quest to ameliorate housing insecurities, we continued to face homelessness in the U.S. As a child, my family's daily routine consisted of morning commutes that started at 4:00 AM to arrive at work and school in San Diego on time and driving back as late as 10:00 PM due to long commutes, work and school schedules. Crossing one of the world's busiest borders meant that our commute times were very long, ranging from four to eight hours round-trip, depending on the day, time, and season of the year we crossed. Our entire days were spent in San Diego, going to school and work, with occasional breakfasts at McDonalds and improvised dinners in our car. Oftentimes, my younger brother and I would take naps in the car before starting school, after our mother would drop-off our dad to work at a local grocery store at 6:00 AM. While we napped, our mother would do her assigned readings for law school in the car, strategically parked under the shining light of a pole in the store's parking lot, until she had

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to drive us to school. After school, our father would pick us up, and my brother and I would also do our homework in the car, parks or lobby room at the law school where we would wait for our mom to end her work and school schedule, sometimes as late as 10:00 PM. Education was important for my parents, and they did everything they could for my brother and I to practice our human right to an education in our country of origin.

My story is similar to the stories of many families living along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Some families live between both nations due to poverty; others are families of mix immigration status, at one point separated by massive deportations in the U.S., and they live between both nations to stay together; the rest come from a long lineage of families living on both sides of the border, with deep ties at the borderlands established long before the inception of the border in 1819. The reasons why people lead lives on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border vary, but the experience has a long-lasting impression on their identities. For me, this experience has significantly shaped my identity, academic trajectory and professional disposition. Today, I still live between both nations to keep friendships with loved ones on both sides of the border, for professional and scholarly development in higher education institutions in the U.S. and Mexico, and to engage in civic leadership with communities in San Diego and Tijuana.

A Timeline of Local, National and Global Crises During My Academic Trajectory

I am writing the last chapters of my dissertation during the period of the worldwide Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the uprisings to protest the murders of innocent Black people by police in the U.S., under the Trump presidency. This moment takes me back to a timeline of local, national and global crises, taking place during my academic trajectory, that have directly and indirectly impacted my life as a student. The first national crisis I remember was the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States at the World

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Trade Center's Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia. During 9/11, the U.S.-Mexico International Ports of Entry were continuously closed for many hours. Following the weeks, months and years after 9/11, security at the border became significantly strengthened through policing and military tactics, and border wait times doubled and tripled. I was a sophomore in high school and my brother was in middle school during 9/11. There were times when we would wait for up to six hours to cross via the pedestrian port of entry to go to school, and there were other times when we were not able to make it to school at all.

The complexities of life at the borderlands were often embodied in the double jeopardy of being exposed to drug related violence in Mexico and the constant harassment by U.S. Customs agents at the border. Human Rights violations by U.S. Customs agents were perpetuated by the impunity to search, detain, sexually harass, and threaten to shoot and kill under their own judgment. More than once, my brother and father have been arbitrarily handcuffed and detained at the border by U.S. Customs agents, because “they fit the profile,” only to be released hours later as innocent. On the other edge of the sword, youth in my community were often recruited by organized crime to smuggle drugs as a way out of poverty. In 2013, a 16-year-old teen tried to smuggle liquid methamphetamine through the San Ysidro International Port of Entry and was coerced by U.S. Customs agents to drink the drugs; he died two hours later. Events like these have made it challenging for me to focus on my studies, as I often times worried about the wellbeing of my loved ones. During my first year of doctoral studies, in the summer of 2015, one of my childhood friends was assassinated in front of our hometown’s church in broad daylight. His assassination made local and state headlines in Tijuana, Baja California; he was mistaken for someone else and killed by *sicarios* [hitmen]. I struggled to find the peace of mind to focus on my writing that year and the years that followed.

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The Trump era (2017 to 2021) has been a time of local, national and global conflicts of xenophobia and racism, creating a dangerous and hostile political climate for immigrants and people of color in the U.S. and along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. For me and other Transfronterizx students, this has been a time of perpetual racial battle and fatigue, where we have been faced with the challenges of balancing academics, work, family and civic leadership amidst Trump's constant displays of racism in the media and policy against our communities by openly criminalizing Mexicans as "rapists and criminals" and calling for the construction of a larger wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Refugees from around the world seeking asylum in the U.S. are the most vulnerable communities along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands affected by Trump's xenophobia and racism. Over the last five years, caravans of thousands of refugees from Haiti, Central America and various other parts of the world have fled their countries to seek asylum in the U.S. through the U.S.-Mexico International Ports of Entry. Yet, obtaining asylum in the U.S. has been a long and difficult process for many refugees. For some, asylum has been impossible to obtain due to Trump's harsh policies on asylum and immigration. Seeking asylum in the U.S. has put the lives of refugees at risk while they wait weeks, months and years to be accepted, living in inhumane conditions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

The presence of refugees seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands was followed by a strong militarization of the border, from barbed wire covering the newly constructed Trump Wall and International Ports of Entry, to the presence of U.S. Customs agents and Mexican police dressed in full riot gear along the U.S-Mexico Borderlands and at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. The suffering of refugees was evident every time we crossed the border. As a result, a series of peaceful protests by refugees, social justice organizers, borderlanders and Transfronterizxs took place at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry,

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demanding for the human rights of refugees. On November 25, 2018 a peaceful march for the human rights of migrants and refugees in the Tijuana side of the San Ysidro International Port of Entry was attacked by U.S. Border Patrol Agents who fired hundreds of rounds of tear gas into the crowds in Mexico. Many refugees and asylum seekers, including children and infants, were severely injured. Many of my Transfronterizx peers who participated in the march were also injured. During this time and until presently, my Transfronterizx peers and I volunteered in migrant and refugee support efforts on both sides of the San Diego-Tijuana border. These atrocities and the U.S. presidency's focus on creating a larger barrier between the U.S. and Mexico have made our efforts of civic leadership in our region an extraordinarily difficult task to accomplish.

Organizing Grassroots Transfronterizx Student-Led Change Initiatives in Higher Education Through Unity, Love and Research

Nonetheless, my Transfronterizx community and I have been dedicated to building bridges between both nations through unity and solidarity amongst each other and with marginalized communities at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Due to the hostile environment at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, I've found it paramount to organize safe, inclusive, validating and empowering spaces for Transfronterizx students where we could establish a sense of belonging and community in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. My grassroots organizing journey with Transfronterizx students began at San Diego State University during my first academic year of doctoral studies, in fall 2014 to spring 2015. In 2015, during a time when there were no programs, services or organizations, that I was aware of, focusing on the unique experiences of Transfronterizx students, I began the change making process through participatory action research by creating a

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space of community online through a Facebook Group called, “Estudiantes Transfronterizxs.” In 2017, I utilized this online community and participatory action research to impulse the inception of the first Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University and the nation.

Since then, my community and I have made significant strides towards creating inclusive and validating spaces for Transfronterizx students at SDSU by implementing a transborder studies lecture series, a Transfronterizx student peer mentor program, and solidarity support efforts with refugees and asylum seekers living at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. In addition to organizing grassroots student-led change initiatives through participatory action research for the collegiate success of Transfronterizx college students; most recently, I have also worked on top-down leadership efforts toward creating an inclusive campus climate for this student population at SDSU. In fall 2018, I founded the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) through the Student Success Fee (SSF) grant at SDSU as a strategic effort to implement a long-lasting initiative on-campus dedicated to creating culturally competent campus leaders about the Transfronterizx student experience. TSAP is a program that I had been planning since my M.S. in Counseling, emphasis in student development in higher education studies, in 2013. I had the opportunity to pilot TSAP for the first time in spring 2018, alongside Transfronterizx students, through TASO at SDSU. I utilized my research focused on Transfronterizx students in higher education as content for the trainings.

As Founding Director of TSAP, I am part of a dynamic team of artists, activists and filmmakers. My colleagues are also Transfronterizxs from the San Diego-Tijuana border region and are aware of the virtues and challenges that Transfronterizx youth face. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my colleagues and I have shifted efforts towards implementing multimedia

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participatory storytelling initiatives dedicated to creating culturally relevant leadership experiences for Transfronterizx youth at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands through digital engagement online, having Transfronterizx students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region and along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands join our initiatives online. Hand-in-hand with my research is organizing safe spaces of inclusion, cultural validation, community, empowerment and social justice for Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana border region and along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Consequently, these organizations and community have also become transformational spaces of inclusion for me. My aspirations for this dissertation study are to create a transborder identity development model that educators can utilize to better understand the transborder experiences, academic trajectories and social identities of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. My hopes are to also inspire student affairs educators in postsecondary and higher education institutions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands to implement top-down leadership initiatives to foster the learning, development and success of their Transfronterizx college student population, who form part of their campus communities.

Background and Purpose of the Study

The international border between the cities of San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico, is one of the most frequently crossed borders in the world, with approximately 70,000 northbound vehicle crossings and 20,000 northbound pedestrian crossings each day (San Ysidro Land Port of Entry Project Facts, 2020). College students lead transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by living and commuting to both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border while attending postsecondary and higher education institutions in San Diego, CA, (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). Scholars who have studied

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students that live transborder lives have culturally identified the student group as *Transfronterizx* [transborder] as a result of their transborder ties to both nations—Mexico and the United States (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Relaño Pastor, 2007). Transfronterizx college students' ties to both nations and their transborder lives are significant interactions that contribute to their identity development and academic success (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). However, few researchers have studied the experiences of Transfronterizx college students (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Relaño Pastor, 2007) and there is a paucity of research that systematically illustrates the formation process of their identities, transborder lives and academic trajectories (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The paucity of scholarly literature on Transfronterizx college students is problematic for educators who hope to foster the learning and development of this student population in postsecondary and higher education. The lack of understanding of Transfronterizx college students by scholars and practitioners in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands is also reflected in the absence of on-campus programs and services for this student population. Overall, the lived realities of Transfronterizx college students are not reflected in the policies, practices, and initiatives of postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. The lack of inclusion of Transfronterizx college students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja Californian, is a serious consequence of the marginalization of this student population.

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Significance of the Study

The primary goal of student affairs professionals is to provide a developmental environment for students in higher education institutions (McEwen, 2003). The understanding of “who the college student is in developmental terms” (Knefelkamp et al., 1978) is a significant component of the conceptual understanding of student development. Hence, this study explored the identity development process of current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education in order to inform the implementation of programs, policies and initiatives centered on fostering the learning and development of this student population.

Purpose of the Study

Due to recent advances in technology, social scientists argue that visual mediums, such as video and photography, are central to the representation of culture (Rose, 2016). This research includes the use of photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997) as a tool to collect data and engage participants to reflect upon their transborder identity development through photography and dialogue. More specifically, the purpose of this photovoice constructivist grounded theory study is to illustrate the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities. Transfronterizx students’ psychosocial developmental processes were signified by the meanings they ascribed to their transborder identity in relation to themselves, others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Cognitive structural developmental processes were described by Transfronterizx students’ thinking processes and shifts in reasoning about their psychosocial experiences and performances. Development was described through the skills, knowledge, understandings and

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performances that Transfronterizx students acquired through the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories. Development was also described through the skills, knowledge, understandings and performances Transfronterizx students acquired through the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories while navigating multiple oppressions relating to their social identities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

Youth who engage in transborder interactions are prevalent between nations and borders around the world (Nilan, & Feixa, 2006; Palmeiro Pinheiro, 2009; Wood, Aitken, & Swanson, 2016). Transborder phenomena are geographically unique to the characteristics of the environments that are created by a border between two or more nations (Ojeda, 2005; Martinez, 1994), therefore, this study is focused on Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education who live a transborder life at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Scholars who have studied students that live a transborder life at the San Diego-Tijuana border region have identified the student group as Transfronterizx [Transborder] as a result of their transborder ties to both nations—Mexico and the United States (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018; Relaño Pastor, 2007).

Transfronterizx college students are a heterogeneous population; however, most students are U.S.-citizens and keep ties to both nations as a result of social and academic experiences (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018; Relaño Pastor, 2007). Some students have a stable residency in San Diego and cross the border frequently to visit friends and family in Tijuana (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). Other students have stable residencies in both San Diego and Tijuana, and they cross the border two to six times a week for social and academic interactions in both nations. Yet other students forced by sociocultural factors, such as poverty and/or parents that resume their lives in Mexico, have a stable residency in Tijuana and cross the border frequently to continue their education in San Diego, CA, (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

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There is a paucity of published peer-reviewed literature on Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018; Relaño Pastor, 2007). As a result, in this literature review, I also drew from research on Transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) and a study on Transfronterizx college students from the Columbus, New Mexico- Palomas, Mexico border region (Bejarano, 2010). I included literature on Transfronterizx college students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region in the community college and four-year higher education institutions in San Diego, CA, that reveal findings on their on-campus interaction (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

A common theme in the literature on Transfronterizx college students (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and Transfronterizx high school students (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is the participants' interactions through the U.S.-Mexico international border and their ties to both nations that contribute to their cultural identity and academic experiences. The literature on Transfronterizx students in postsecondary, higher education and high school at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands reveal findings relating to their cultural identities, such as agency, resistance, resilience and adaptability, that shed light to understanding the formation process and intersectionalities of their transborder identity. In the following sections, I used the concepts presented in figure 1 to illustrate how Transfronterizx college students and high school students form their identity as a result of their transborder interactions at the U.S.-Mexico transborder context and frequent sociocultural interactions in both nations.

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Transborder Context

Transborder contexts are created by the social interaction of people between nations who are divided by an international border (Ojeda, 2005/2009). International borders around the world are different, and transborder contexts around the world are unique to the regional characteristics of the international borders that divide each nation (Martinez, 1994). Particularly, the U.S.-Mexico international border is an *interdependent border* where transborder collaboration between economic and human resources is encouraged by both nations (Martinez, 1994). Simultaneously, the U.S.-Mexico international border is also highly monitored by central governments and is kept open only to serve “national agendas” (p. 9).

The characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border also influence the experiences of people who cross the border and live near the region (Martinez, 1994). Martinez (1994) studied people who lived near the U.S.-Mexico border region in order to gain an understanding about the borderlands. His findings revealed four characteristics of the borderlands’ context that shape the culture and sociological experiences of people who live near the borderlands and called these characteristics “the borderlands milieu” (p.10). While all residents of the U.S.-Mexico border region are exposed to different levels of the neighboring country, most individuals experience, to some degree, “transnational interaction, international conflict and accommodation, ethnic conflict and accommodation, and separateness” (Martinez, 1994; p. 10). In the following sections, I highlight how the characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border have shaped the sociocultural trajectories of people living in the borderlands and Transfronterizx college students.

History of Violence at the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Martinez’ (1994) research on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands revealed that ethnic conflict, such as prejudice, discrimination, and racism, was more common among people living in the

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border regions compared to populations living in the heartlands. History of ethnic violence in U.S.-Mexico border towns has been documented as early as the 1830's, before the 1846-48 U.S.-Mexico War (Martinez, 2006). Since its inception, the U.S.-Mexico border and its political powers have perpetuated violence and oppression, separating families and communities in the regions. For example, the Kumeyaay nation has been indigenous to Southern California, USA, and Baja California, Mexico, since ages before colonization (Wood, Aiken, Swanson, 2016). Yet, "The US/Mexico border is a violent imposition that eroded this indigenous community's ability to maintain connections to family and territory on opposite sides of the border" (p. 513). Colonialism and the U.S.-Mexico border have displaced the Kumeyaay people from spaces that have historically been vital to their existence. The imposition of the U.S.-Mexico border has divided an entire nation, separating Kumeyaay people from their land, culture and families. Until today, the violent imposition of the U.S.-Mexico border perpetuates oppression against the Kumeyaay people, separating their community into reservations on both sides of the border.

Intense Policing, Racism and a Culture of Impunity at the U.S.-Mexico Border

In current times, the intense motorization and policing of the U.S.-Mexico border by central governments continues to perpetuate ethnic violence among communities in the borderlands (Martinez, 1994). For example, since 1994 the United States has spent billions of dollars on government funded anti-immigration programs, like "Operation Blockade", "Operation Hold up the Line", and "Operation Gatekeeper" (Ackleson, 2005; Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999). "The Secure Fence Act of 2006 called for double-layer fencing along 1,126-km of the border to stop both vehicular and pedestrian traffic" (Wood, Aiken, Swanson, 2016; p. 511). More recently, the Trump presidential administration has proposed policies to build yet another wall along the U.S.-Mexico border (Sotres & Rios, 2017). Political powers that fuel the

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high policing of the U.S.-Mexico border are also paired by acts of discrimination from anti-immigration groups formed by private citizens who believe they are supporting the efforts of the border patrol, such as the “Minutemen” (Oliviero, 2011).

The intense policing of the U.S.-Mexico border is also coupled by a culture of impunity that U.S. Customs agents operate under. Sotres and Rios (2017) documented testimonies from victims of mistreatment and abuse at the U.S. southern border, focusing on the ports of entry in San Diego, CA. A total of 51 individuals, ranging from 17 to 80 years of age, were brave enough to come forward with their testimonies of abuse, and their stories dated back as early as 1985 to current times. Sotres’ and Rios’ findings ranged from verbal mistreatments and discrimination to psychological, physical and sexual abuse at the U.S.-Mexico border, revealing U.S. Customs agents’ actions and dispositions towards abusing their power.

It is noteworthy to highlight the racist, anti-immigrant, and xenophobic rhetoric, perpetuated by the current Trump presidential administration, that has influenced a dangerous and hostile climate for immigrants and communities of color in the U.S. and U.S.-Mexico border crossers. In Sotres’ and Rios’ study, since the 2017 Trump presidential inauguration, participants noted more frequent and more aggressive scrutiny by U.S. Customs agents. In a different study, focused on Transfronterizx college students, participants also described a more hostile and tense environment at the San Diego-Tijuana ports of entry during the 2017 Trump presidential inauguration (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

Transborder People

Despite the physical and political obstacles of the U.S.-Mexico International Border, transborder collaboration is a way of life for many borderlanders who reside near the U.S.-

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Mexico border region (Martinez, 1994; Ojeda, 2005/2009; Vélez-Ibáñez, 2010). Research on transborder families from the U.S.-Mexico border region emphasize that the experiences of these individuals are conditioned by the unique characteristics of the border and borderlands. Both Ojeda (1994/2005/2009) and Martinez (1994) highlight that borderlanders and people who frequently cross the U.S.-Mexico border are significant actors who create the transborder context. Additionally, the characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border also influence the experiences of transborder people and their identities (Iglesias-Prieto, 2011/2014; Velasco Ortiz & Contreras, 2014). It can be argued that Transfronterizx college students may experience the elements of the transborder milieu more intensely due to their frequent transborder interactions. In the next sub-section, I highlight how the characteristics of the transborder context influence the most prevalent challenges faced by transfronterizx college students in their daily transborder trajectories.

Transfronterizx Students' Daily Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border and Higher Education Institutions at the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

The characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico Transborder Context is an environment that Transfronterizx students are exposed to daily, and many of them face intense policing, racism and a culture of impunity at the border. In a qualitative study, Benjarano (2010) explored the social-cultural and academic experiences of Transfronterizx college students from the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region, and the researcher's study revealed the intense policing that students faced daily in their transborder interactions. Benjarano used the term *ritualized violence* to describe the "checkpoint interrogations, citizenship probing questions, vehicle and document inspections, merchandise checks by federal agents, and ID background checks by scanning passports and processing drivers' licenses" (p. 395) that participants faced in

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their daily transborder commutes from home to school. Similar encounters have been disclosed in qualitative studies on Transfronterizx college students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

Particularly, in a participatory action research study conducted from 2015 to 2017, participants described noticing a more militarized and law enforced environment at the San Ysidro Port of Entry during the 2017 Trump presidential inauguration, as they illustrated longer border wait times, more visibly armed U.S. Customs agents and more U.S. Customs detector dogs.

Additionally, a challenge that is congruent in most literature on Transfronterizx college students is the long border wait times that students face during their transborder commutes, due to the intense surveillance that each vehicle and pedestrian is subject to in the U.S.-Mexico border ports of entry (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

Parallel to the literature that revealed harassment, racism, abuse and a culture of impunity at the San Diego International Ports of Entry (Sotres & Rios, 2017), Transfronterizx college students from the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region and the San Diego-Tijuana border region have also disclosed discrimination and criminalization by U.S. Customs agents and law enforcement officials, both inside and outside the international border (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). For example, in the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region, Transfronterizx college students described being profiled with more scrutiny by U.S. Customs agents by being targeted as drug mules and human traffickers due to heightened xenophobia (Benjarano, 2010). In a study on male Transfronterizx community college students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region, participants disclosed being profiled as criminals by authorities on

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both sides of the border and accounted being stereotyped because of their male gender and Mexican-American ethnicity (Falcón Orta et al., 2018). In the same study, a student “described experiences of abuse, profiling and racism and witnessing of sexual harassment towards a female border crosser by a U.S. Customs agent” (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; p. 8).

The transgressions that Transfronterizx college students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border also intersected with their on-campus experiences in their higher education institutions. For example, in the study by Falcón Orta et al. (2018), a participant explained how the daily harassment and arbitrary secondary inspections by U.S. Customs agents prevented him from being able to arrive to class on time and directly hindered his academic success in the community college. Microaggressions and racism were not only perpetuated by U.S. Customs agents at the U.S.-Mexico international ports of entry but also by university officials in higher education institutions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Benjarano (2010) uses the term *institutional violence* to describe the daunting microaggressions and racism perpetuated by faculty and staff at a higher education institution in Columbus, New Mexico, that questioned Transfronterizx students’ U.S.-citizenship and their higher education legitimacy. Similarly, in a quantitative study of 100 Transfronterizx students in a higher education institution in the San Diego, CA, border town, findings revealed that students reported experiencing moderately high levels of racial and ethnic tensions on-campus (Falcón Orta, [in preparation]).

Transfronterizx college students’ experiences of racial and ethnic tensions (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) parallel Martinez’ (1994) findings on ethnic conflict in the transborder milieu. Additionally, the findings also reveal how the highly policed and militarized characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border influence Transfronterizx students’ daily transborder trajectories. The challenges that

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Transfronterizx students faced due to the highly policed and militarized nature of the U.S.-Mexico border, coupled by ethnic tensions and racism in both the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region (Benjarano, 2010) highlight the consistency in the characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico transborder context between two different U.S.-Mexico Ports of Entry and cities.

It is evident that the U.S.-Mexico transborder context is a significant environment in the lives of transfronterizx college students. Transfronterizx college students are also significant actors in creating the U.S.-Mexico transborder context. Researchers have noted how the challenges faced by Transfronterizx college students in the U.S.-Mexico transborder context have significant implications in students' sociocultural interactions (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and their transborder identity formation processes (Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). In the next section of this study, I analyzed how Transfronterizx college students adapted to the challenges they encountered in the U.S.-Mexico transborder context, in order to better understand their transborder identity formation process and intersections of their multiple identities. Moreover, I used the concept of transborderism (2011/2014) to provide a lens to understanding how Transfronterizx students' transborder interactions influenced their identity development process.

Transborderism

Iglesias-Prieto (2011/2014) coined the term *transborderism* to define four different levels of transborder interactions among people who cross the U.S.-Mexico border, ranging from level one: basic, to level four: intense and complex. Iglesias-Prieto's study was based on the

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analysis of 350 mental maps during 13 years of studying college students who described the complexities of their transborder interactions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Most of the participants were Transfronterizx college students and their descriptions revealed intense and complex levels of transborder interactions. Particularly, Iglesias-Prieto states that people who are in the level four of *transborderism* are *transborder citizens* who are deeply and intensely engaged in transborder interactions. Iglesias-Prieto explains that transborder citizens frequently cross the U.S.-Mexico international border and are fully integrated in the Mexican and American cultures and societies. Transborder citizens typically live, study or work on both sides of the border, and usually cross the international border on a daily basis.

Iglesias-Prieto (2011) further explains that transborder citizens are deeply and intensely engaged in transborder interactions and are more critically aware of everyday realities of border living. Particularly, their everyday realities as transborder citizens significantly influence their identities. Velasco Ortiz and Contrera's (2014), study on the effects of the Mexico-United States geopolitical border in people who reside near the border and those who cross the border revealed similar results. The researchers explored the biographical interviews of 60 individuals, and they found that individuals experienced the border in five different forms: (1) The Uncrossed Border, (2) The Border as Background, (3) The Everyday Border, (4) The Boundary Transposed, and (5) The Interstitial Border. The participants who experienced *the everyday border* mirror the experiences of the *transborder citizens*. The researchers highlight that the frequent interactions across the border required a significant capacity to adapt and acquire cultural skills, such as language proficiency.

Transborder Field and Habitus

Valenzuela Arce (2014) conceptualizes transborderism as sociocultural interactions

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among Transfronterizx individuals that produce a *transborder field* and *habitus* consisting of collective practices and long-lasting dispositions. Valenzuela Arce draws parallels from Bourdieu's and Passerson's (1997) field and habitus theory by conceptualizing the *field* as a societal battlefield where people struggle to obtain desired resources and *habitus* as subjectivities and dispositions obtained through socialized practices in the societal systems. Particularly, Valenzuela Arce defines the sociocultural interactions of Transfronterizx individuals as *transborder habitus* consisting of collective practices and long-lasting dispositions, such as living, working, and attending education institutions on both sides of the border and performing daily routines necessary for a transborder lifestyle.

Transborder Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital in three forms: the *embodied state*, "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (p. 243), the *objectified state*, such as cultural goods, and the *institutionalized state*, like institutional recognition or academic credentials. The embodied state is learned and acquired through earlier conditions, such as values and actions of individuals' sociocultural environments. Similar to Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, and concepts of the embodied state and habitus, scholars who have studied Transfronterizx students have found that participants acquired long lasting skills, knowledge, dispositions and practices through their transborder interactions (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018).

For example, Chávez Montaña (2006) studied the experiences of 40 Transfronterizx college students and alumni from a university in San Diego and provided a framework for the systematic understanding of the cultural capital Transfronterizx students accumulated through their transborder lifestyle. Comparable to the *transborder citizens* and the individuals who

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experienced the *everyday border*, Transfronterizx students acquired a cultural capital that allowed them to navigate socially and professionally both the American and the Mexican societies. Similarly, Cueva Esquivel (2018) explored the retrospective reflections of eight Transfronterizx young adults' high school trajectories through qualitative mix-method case studies of each participant and found that students acquired unique knowledge and skills that allowed them to successfully navigate their border environments. Cueva Esquivel's study revealed that through the development of resilience, over time, Transfronterizx young adults adapted and changed due to the adversities they faced in their San Diego-Tijuana border environment in order to successfully obtain their high school education. Cueva Esquivel's findings show how a transborder cultural capital is acquired through time, illuminating a process of transborder growth and development.

The Makings of a Transborder Movement

Noted in the previous sections, scholars assert that Transfronterizx people are significant actors in the creation of the transborder context (Ojeda, 1994/2005/2009; Martinez, 1994). Recently documented, Transfronterizx young adults have implemented the BorderClick program at the AjA Project and the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) and the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) at San Diego State University through student-led grassroots organizing focused on creating spaces of inclusion for Transfronterizx youth at the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020). These organizations were created by Transfronterizx young adults with the purpose of creating spaces of inclusion for Transfronterizx students in high school, postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Despite frequent transborder interactions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region, with 70,000 northbound vehicle crossings and 20,000 northbound pedestrian crossings

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each day (San Ysidro Land Port of Entry, 2020), a common challenge mentioned by Transfronterizx youth is the invisibility and lack of validation as a transborder culture (Falcon, et al., 2018). Evident in these grassroots organizations is the power of Transfronterizx young adults to change societal systems in their transborder context in order to create spaces of inclusion for one another.

Moreover, the grassroots organizations are exemplars to understanding Transfronterizx students' resiliencies to adapt to their transborder environment and apply cultural capital and transborder cultural capital to employ agency in their transborder field. The participants of these organizations employed both cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and transborder cultural capital (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Cueva Esquivel, 2018) to establish the initiatives of inclusion for the Transfronterizx community. For example, to establish the student organizations, participants had to have an understanding of how to navigate policies and regulations in higher education. Likewise, to establish spaces of inclusion and cultural relevance for the Transfronterizx community, participants did not only have to understand the needs of the Transfronterizx community but also had to navigate the transborder field and operate efforts in both nations and societies—San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico.

It is evident that Transfronterizx students are significant actors in the transborder context, and the concepts of a transborder field, habitus and cultural capital provide a lens to understanding how Transfronterizx students adapt and develop as a result of their transborder sociocultural interactions. Scholars have also found that Transfronterizx students' adaptation processes to the challenges they face in their transborder milieus influence the formation of their transborder identities (Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018). In the following section, I describe the different sociocultural identity processes illustrated in the literature on Transfronterizx students

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from the U.S.-Mexico border region in postsecondary and higher education institutions (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and high school (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016).

Transborder Sociocultural Identity Processes

Noted in the previous section, transfronterizx students' processes of adaptation to the challenges they face in their transborder milieu have long lasting effects on their development. In an exploratory-grounded theory study of 12 Transfronterizx college students in the San Diego-Tijuana border region, Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón (2018) found that the process of adapting to the obstacles Transfronterizx students experienced through their transborder lifestyle influenced the formation of their identities. The researchers coined the term *transborder identity* to illustrate transfronterizx students' formation processes specific to their transborder interactions, such as frequent and intense engagement through the U.S.-Mexico international border and both nations—the United States and Mexico. The researchers found that, as a result of the challenges students faced through the U.S.-Mexico international border and their transborder interactions, students adapted subjectively and behaviorally to their environment. Some examples of how students adapted to the obstacles they experienced were: eliminating the border wait, planning for unexpected events, and intentionally and unintentionally blending into both the American and the Mexican cultures.

Similar to Falcón Orta's & Orta Falcón's (2018) findings, scholars who have studied Transfronterizx students from the U.S.-Mexico border region in higher education (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and high school (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) have found that students engage in various sociocultural identity processes as a result of their transborder interactions and

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obstacles faced in their transborder milieus. Many of the transborder interactions and obstacles noted by scholars who have focused their research on Transfronterizx students are similar to the element of the transborder milieu presented by Martinez (1994), such as international conflict and ethnic conflict. This connection highlights how the characteristics of the transborder context influence the experiences of Transfronterizx college students.

Hand-in-hand with adaptability, two common themes in the literature on Transfronterizx students from the U.S.-Mexico border region in higher education (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and high school (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) is resilience and resistance. For example, Cueva Esquivel (2018) found that Transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region develop resilience over time in order to adapt and change to the adversities they faced in their transborder lives. Similarly, in a qualitative study focused on 12 Transfronterizx college students, findings revealed that students depicted adaptability as a necessary trait to developing in their transborder environments (Falcon, 2013). Moreover, participants described the act of crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border and the act of adapting to the challenges of their environment as an act of resistance against a geopolitical barrier meant to separate nations and people. Scholars who have focused their research on Transfronterizx students from the U.S.-Mexico border region in higher education (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and high school (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) have found sociocultural identity processes unique to Transfronterizx student's transborder interactions that shed light to understanding the various elements of a transborder identity. In the following sections, I illustrate the sociocultural identity processes found in the literature on

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Transfronterizx students.

In-betweenness and Hybridity

Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón (2018) found that Transfronterizx college students' from the San Diego-Tijuana border region processes of adaptation to the obstacles they faced through their transborder lives influenced their identities through six different phases: (1) *Unique*, (2) *In-Between*, (3) *Adapting Subjectively and Behaviorally* (4) *Mixture of Both Cultures*, (5) *Transborder Culture Defined* and (6) *New Cultural Practices and Subjective Positions*. Particularly, *In-Between* was defined by participants' thoughts about feeling like they were between two nations where they did not belong, due to encounters of exclusion and discrimination in both countries. "Overall, the participants described the feeling of being '*in-between*' cultures, societies and nations as a confusing and uncomfortable experience" (p.19). Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón (2018) note that participants who depicted thoughts of being *in-between* cultures, societies and nations were younger in age, and in the beginning stages of a transborder lifestyle, as compared to other participants in the study. In regard to processes of adaptation, participants "adjusted their thoughts and behavior, in different forms, to cope with factors that influenced the experiences of being in in-between cultures, societies and nations" (p. 19).

The concept of hybridity (Garcia Canclini, 1989/1995) provides insights to understanding the complexities of Transfronterizx students' sociocultural processes of the *in-between* phase of their identities. Border theorists explain that individuals who live near the U.S.-Mexico border region form their identities through a process of hybridization (Garcia Canclini, 1989/1995; Gloria-Anzaldua, 1987). Particularly, the resistance and oppression that they experience from being between both cultures are the conditions that influence a form of juxtaposition between

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both cultural elements that inform the process of hybridization. Moreover, borderlanders experience the process of hybridization due to the juxtaposed environments of the U.S.-Mexico border region. Paradoxically, people experience hybridity through the process of perceptively challenging the limitations of both cultures and creating “an in-between identity, but this hybrid subject still requires cultural, social, and symbolic boundaries to constitute its own identity” (Marotta, 2008, p. 304). A common feature that is illustrated in the process of hybridity is the development of a new identity that is created through established cultural elements (Parker, 1928; Marotta, 2008). In the process of creating a new identity through hybridity, individuals experience a cultural synthesis through the process of resistance and juxtaposition between both cultures.

Code Switching and Translanguaging

Valenzuela Arce (2014) asserts that individuals who cross borders frequently engage in cultural code switching, due to their deep understanding of the language and cultural norms of the nations that they are frequently engaged in. In linguistics, code switching occurs when speakers alternated between two or more languages within a single conversation. Zentella (2007) conducted a qualitative study of 40 Transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region and found that participants often engaged in linguistic code switching between English and Spanish without noticing, due to their capital of both languages. Similar to Zentella’s finding, Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón (2018) found that Transfronterizx college students engaged in linguistic code switching, however, their employment of linguistic code switching between English and Spanish was intentional in order to avoid exclusion, discrimination and racism in both nations. Moreover, in regard to adaptation, participants discussed the necessary skill to learn both languages as proficient as possible in order to alternate

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between both cultures.

Translanguaging is the involvement of bilingual speakers' use of their multiple languages as a resource to employ a collective cultural communication system (García & Wei, 2014).

Zentella's (2016) qualitative research on the linguistic practices of Transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region illustrates how participants employ translanguaging by interchangeably using both English and Spanish among peers. Moreover, for Transfronterizx high school students, translanguaging was a form cultural identification by "recognizing their allegiance to two nations, languages, and cultures" (p. 336).

Border Rootedness as Transformational Resistance

Benjarano (2010) defines *border rootedness* as the transformational resistance, of Transfronterizx college students, to the hostile surveillance and racism at the Columbus, New Mexico-Palomas, Mexico border. Benjarano's study illustrated how Transfronterizx students learn strategies of *transformative resistance* that allow them to survive the daily infringement of their rights at the border and in the university, where boundary reinforcers (law enforcement agents, University professors, other students, administrators, and staff) judge, assess, surveil, and 'inspect' them as 'aliens' or who have 'illegally' crossed into college territory (p. 392). At the border, the learned strategies that participants utilized in order to employ *border rootedness* were a result of a deep and complex understanding of the border and border agents that allowed them to anticipate "prying questions, knowing inspection procedures, practicing compliance and obedience, preparing oneself psychologically and physically for inspection, and surviving getting through 'the line' (e.g., highway and international checkpoints) to get home" (p. 395). These strategies of transformational resistance allowed participants to cope with and adapt to the intense surveillance and discrimination at the U.S.-Mexico international border.

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Agency, Resistance and Belonging

The implementation process of Transfronterizx young adults' student-led grassroots organizations: the BorderClick program at the AjA project and the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) and the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) at San Diego State University (SDSU) are examples of students' agency, resistance and belonging at U.S.-Mexico border milieu. Transfronterizx students' civic leadership in these organizations attributed to positive affirmations of their transborder cultural identities (Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020). For example, at BorderClick and TSAP, students demonstrated images that portrayed the resiliencies of their transborder cultural identity as a tool to educate people who were not familiar with their day-to-day transborder trajectories. In addition to creating spaces of inclusion, the organizations also supported students dealing with challenges encountered through their transborder interactions. For example, at TASO, students shared testimonies about their engagement in the student organization that revealed results relating to sense of community, cultural relevance and a safe space (Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020). Noteworthy is the fact that TASO was established in February 2017, soon after the Trump presidential inauguration. Considering the political climate, participants shared that the student organization provided them with a "space of healing" where they could talk about the tense climate they faced both at the border and on-campus.

Intersectionality

Iglesias-Prieto (2011/2014) posits that Transfronterizx students are deeply and intensely engaged in transborder interactions and are more critically aware of everyday realities of border living. Particularly, their everyday realities as transborder citizens significantly influence their identities. Yet, there is a paucity of research focused on studying the intersections of

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Transfronterizx students' social identities in relation to their transborder interactions (Falcón Orta, et al., 2018). Falcón Orta, et al (2018). examined the intersections of a male transborder identity in an exploratory phenomenology informed qualitative study of four Mexican-American men in the community college who lived a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The study revealed “participants’ intersecting encounters in various societal systems and experiences of oppression in relation to their Transborder culture, Mexican-American ethnicity and male gender identity” (p. 6). The researchers’ qualitative analysis of the participants’ responses revealed the following themes: “(1) Ethnic and Cultural Tensions in the Community College, (2) Criminalization Through the Transborder Commute and (3) Academic Challenges Due to the Transborder Commute” (p.6). Particularly, participants “thoughts, actions and feelings about the intersection of their masculinity, ethnicity and Transborder cultural identity” (p.6) were significantly influenced by multiple oppressions they faced in societal systems in both nations and the U.S.-Mexico international border. This study highlights how an intersectionality framework can provide researchers with a critical lens towards studying a transborder identity. As noted in the previous sections of this study, Transfronterizx students face multiple oppressions in the societal institutions of higher education and the U.S.-Mexico international border. As a result, it is critical to situate the study of a transborder identity developmental by examining the intersections of participants’ social identities.

Museus and Griffins (2011) address the value of using “*intersectionality research, intersectionality framework, or intersectional analysis*” (p. 7) in higher education, in order to create informed understanding of the experiences of students, faculty and administrators. They defined intersectionality as the “relationships among multiple social dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Similarly, Dill and

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Zambrana (2009) discuss how intersectionality serves as a critical analytical lens for the study of “racial, ethnic, class, physical, age, sexuality and gender disparities” (p.3). While Transfronterizx students are considered a heterogeneous population that vary in ethnicity, race and gender through an intersectionality framework; scholars and practitioners can study and foster the learning and development of this diverse student population in higher education institutions in San Diego, CA.

Museus and Griffins (2011) illustrate two types of Intersectionalities: (1) *structural intersectionality* and (1) *political intersectionality*. Situating the analysis of Transfronterizx students’ identities through these frameworks provide a critical lens towards understanding how this student population experiences power and oppression through various societal contexts and social interactions inside and outside higher education institutions. *Structural intersectionality* addresses how various societal systems, such as higher education, intersect and influence experiences of oppression among individuals (Crenshaw, 1991). Overall, the lack of programs, services and policies that address the experiences of Transfronterizx students in higher education foster an oppressive environment for this student population in higher education. *Political intersectionality* addresses how different social groups that individuals belong to seek different political agendas that may marginalize the voices of individuals who also have intersecting identities, such as against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). In the process of examining the identity development of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education, it is critical to take into the intersections of their social identities. Consequently, addressing transborder identity development, without acknowledging students’ intersecting social identities, may continue the perpetuation of marginalization among this student population.

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Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this dissertation study is informed by the following four concepts: (1) Transborder Context (Martinez, 1994/2006; Ojeda, 1994/2005; Velasco Ortiz & Contreras, 2014), (2) Transborderism (Iglesias-Prieto, 2011/2014), (3) Transborder Sociocultural Identity Processes (Benjarano, 2010; Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018; Zentella, 2016) and (4) Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Museus & Griffin, 2011). Illustrated in figure 1, these four concepts are synthesized to form a conceptual framework for the understanding of the identity development process of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education at the from the San Diego-Tijuana border region. While each of these concepts alone explores significant elements in border studies and identity development; together, the four create an interdisciplinary lens to understanding the identity development process of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education as a result of their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

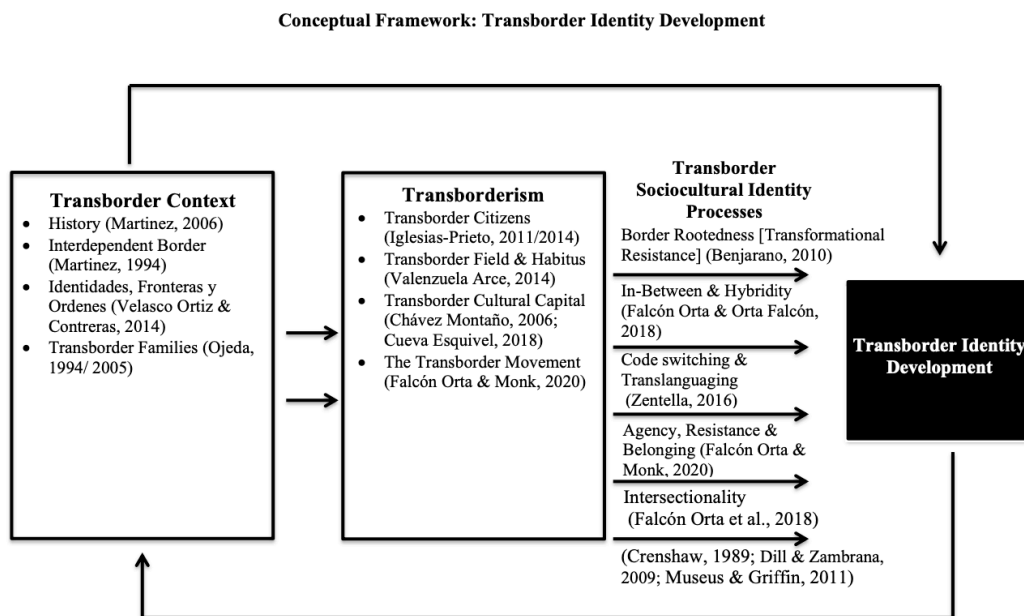


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Transborder Identity Development

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The *transborder contexts* at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands are created by the social interactions of people between the international borders and are geographically unique to the characteristics of the environments created by the border (Ojeda, 2005; Martinez, 1994). Likewise, the characteristics of the international border shape the culture and sociological behavior of transborder people (Martinez, 1994). Iglesias-Prieto (2011) coined the term *transborderism* to illustrate how people interact in different levels between both nations in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Iglesias-Prieto (2011) further explains that *transborder citizens* are deeply and intensely engaged in transborder interactions and are more critically self-aware of the everyday realities at the border region. Particularly, their everyday realities as *transborder citizens* significantly influence their identities. According to this definition, Transfronterizx college students are transborder citizens. Little is known about the identity development process of *transborder citizens*, however, the concepts of a *transborder field*, *habitus* (Valenzuela Arce, 2014) and *cultural capital* (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Cueva Esquivel, 2018) provide a lens to understanding how Transfronterizx students adapt and develop as a result of their *transborder sociocultural interactions*.

Recent literature on Transfronterizx students from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands in postsecondary and higher education (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018) and high school (Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) reveal how Transfronterizx students' adapting process to the challenges they face in their transborder milieus influence the development of their transborder identities. The literature on Transfronterizx students illustrates participants' various sociocultural identity processes as a result of their transborder interactions; however, there is a paucity of research about the intersections of their social identities (Falcón Orta, et al., 2018).

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The concept of intersectionality suggests that identification with multiple social categories (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, etc.) is not mutually exclusive, and these identities concurrently interact in a variety of ways (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality framework also attends to prevailing socio-structural and power influences among groups (e.g., race or gender), and examines identities in the context of current climate (Hankivsky, 2012; Shields, 2008). With the goal of critically understanding the identity development of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education, intersectionality provides a critical lens, as accounts of individuals with marginalized social identities are expected to vary within the group and are nested in socio-structural contexts. As a result, in this dissertation study, intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is applied as an analytical lens to examining the intersections between Transfronterizx students' social identities and their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Research Questions

The purpose of this photovoice constructivist grounded theory study is to illustrate the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities. The central research question of this study was: *What are the Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity?*

This question was guided by the following sub-questions:

Sub-RQ1: How do Transfronterizx students ascribe meaning to their Transborder Identity?

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Sub-RQ2: What are the psychosocial and cognitive structural processes of a transborder identity?

Sub-RQ3: What are the social identity intersections of a transborder identity?

Sub-RQ4: How do Transfronterizx students' psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes about their transborder identity development influenced their social identities?

Sub-RQ5: What are the developmental skills, knowledge, understandings, practices and thinking patters Transfronterizx students acquire through time?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

A Photovoice Constructivist Grounded Theory Research Design

This is a photovoice constructivist grounded theory study guided by postmodernism and critical theory epistemological worldview. Post modernism is an epistemological world view that takes importance of different discourses from marginalized groups and aims to deconstruct master narratives and other ideologies that have power and influence (Creswell, 2013). In line with a critical theory epistemological worldview focused on empowering and encouraging individuals to examine the circumstances of their existence (Creswell, 2013; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993), I engaged the participants of this study in the shared meaning making process. Through this process, my goal was to create a transborder identity development model for Transfronterix students in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, grounded on the voices of the participants.

The characteristics of qualitative research are aligned with the epistemological worldview and inquiry paradigm of this dissertation. First, in qualitative research, the voices of the participants are prioritized as the collective reality of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). Thus, qualitative research is aligned with a critical epistemological worldview, as participants are engaged in the shared meaning making process. Moreover, the inquiry method of grounded theory was focused on creating a transborder identity development model informed by collective realities of the participants. Second, the researcher is a key instrument in the qualitative research practice. As a result, I engaged in reflective writing about my own transborder identity and dispositions as a researcher and organizer before, during and after data collection. Third, qualitative research is conducted through multiple methods of inquiry. Therefore, multiple methods of data collection were utilized in this study, such as participant

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questionnaires, photovoice focus groups, photovoice one-on-one interviews, and participant photographs. Fourth, qualitative research is an emergent design and “the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed” (Creswell, 2013; p. 47). Although, I spent much time and effort in the method design of this dissertation, I was also flexible to changes in the method design that emerge in the research process. Overall, the two methods of inquiry that I implemented in this dissertation to engage participants in reflection about their transborder identity development were constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1994).

Methodological Approach #1: Constructivist Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the book titled, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. The method of grounded theory was developed through their extensive qualitative analysis of death and dying (Glaser & Strauss, 1965/1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduce the idea that systematic qualitative research can be utilized to create theory. Thus, a defining component of grounded theory is that codes and categories emerge from the data, “not from preconceived logically deduced hypothesis” (Charmaz, 2014; p.7).

Constructivist grounded theory adopts Glaser’s and Strauss’ (1967) “inductive, comparative, emergent and open-ended approach” (Charmaz, 2014; p. 12) to inquiry. However, the process of inquiry is a construction of knowledge that occurs under specific conditions that researchers may not be aware of. Both the researcher and participant engage in the construction of reality. Thus, research is viewed as process of inquiry that is “constructed rather than discovered” (Charmaz, 2014; p. 13).

I utilized constructivist grounded theory as both an approach to my research and a methodological process of inquiry. Hence, within the premises that inquiry is “constructed rather

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than discovered,” the methodological approach of this dissertation was designed to construct a transborder identity development model informed by voices of Transfronterizx students. Within the premises of construction, the conceptual framework of this dissertation guided the methods in this section. I applied a constructivist grounded theory approach by building on the conceptual framework of this dissertation study and applying grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis.

In grounded theory research, a large number of participants is ideal in order to achieve detail in the theory development (Creswell, 2013). A total of 32 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region participated in this dissertation study. The participants’ backgrounds, academic trajectories, and postsecondary and higher education status are further illustrated in chapter 5 of this dissertation study. The grounded theory data collection methods and analysis are further illustrated in the following sections. Charmaz (2014) posits that grounded theory methodology is transferable with other comparative methods. As a result, I applied grounded theory data collection and analysis interrelatedly with photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1994).

Methodological Approach #2: Photovoice

Photovoice was first introduced by Wang and Burris (1994) in the study titled, *Empowerment through Photo Novella: Portraits of Participation*. In this study, the method of photovoice was first called *photo novella* and utilized as a tool towards empowering 62 rural Chinese women in the action of social change in their community. Wang and Burris (1997) further expanded on their initial research by introducing the term *photovoice* to define their methodological approach to empowering communities through photography. Specifically, Wang and Burris (1997) defined:

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Photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect on their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers. (p. 370).

Similar to grounded theory, I applied photovoice as both an approach to my research and a methodological process of inquiry in data collection and analysis. As a methodological process of inquiry, I applied photovoice as a tool to engage participants in the reflection of their transborder identity development through photography and dialogue. Informed by Wang's and Burris' (1997) first and second goals of photovoice, I engaged participants to reflect on their transborder lives, social identities, resiliencies and challenges as Transfronterizx students through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. As an approach, I utilized photovoice with the goal of igniting change in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, informed by the visual realities and reflections of the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation. As a result, aligned with Wang's and Burris' (1997) third goal of photovoice, to "reach policymakers" (p. 370), I provide critical implications for policy centered on addressing the social justice of Transfronterizx students, informed by the findings of this study, in chapter 7 of this dissertation

I first learned about photovoice as a fellow for the Center for Visual Literary (CVL) at San Diego State University (SDSU), under the guidance of the director and committee member for this dissertation study, Dr. Marva Capello. I further learned how to apply photovoice as an education consultant for the BorderClick program at the AjA project, with the support of the co-founders: lead art educator, Rebecca Goldschmidt and multimedia creative director, Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga. At BorderClick, photovoice was at the core of programing towards

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empowering Transfronterizx youth at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to voice and make their stories visible through photography. With the guidance of Dr. Cappello and the support of Rebecca and Josemar, I piloted the first phase of data collection and analysis of this dissertation study at the BorderClick program. I further applied photovoice as founding director of the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), at SDSU, to empower Transfronterizx youth to voice their resiliencies, challenges, social identities and transborder lives through photography and dialogue. With the support of TSAP, I implemented the second phase of data collection and analysis for this dissertation study. Beyond the scope of this dissertation study, photovoice was paramount to creating safe spaces of community, validation, inclusion, empowerment and social justice at the BorderClick program and at TSAP for the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation study. The background and mission of these programs are further illustrated in chapter 4 of this dissertation study.

I utilized the findings from the photovoice focus groups on phase one of data collection and analysis at BorderClick and the photovoice focus groups on phase two of data collection and analysis at TSAP to create the photovoice one-on-one interview protocols (Appendices H-K) for phase three of data collection and analysis for this dissertation study. All three phases of data collection and analysis were guided by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and informed by photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997). The photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews were facilitated and implemented in English, Spanish and Spanglish. Additionally, I applied multiple visual methodologies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001; Serafini, 2010) to further enhance the interconnected application of photovoice and grounded theory in the data collection and analysis of this study. The photovoice grounded theory research design for this dissertation study is further illustrated in the following sections.

Photovoice Grounded Theory Data Collection and Analysis Research Design

The data collection and analysis research design for this dissertation study was guided by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and informed by photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997). To generate the findings of this study, I conducted 11 photovoice focus groups and 20 one-on-one photovoice interviews in three grounded theory data collection and analysis phases, consisting of 691 photographs with 32 current and former Transfronterix students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. The three phases of data collection and analysis were guided by Charmaz's (2014) phases of grounded theory: (a) initial, (b) focused and (c) axial coding. To further enhance the data collection and analysis of photovoice, I applied participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and a three-part framework for analyzing multimodal texts: (a) perceptual, (b) structural and (c) ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). In figure 2, I illustrate how data collection and analysis is guided by grounded theory (Charmaz's, 2014) and interconnected by the data collection and analysis of photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). Data collection and the application of these methodologies is further described in the following sections.

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<p>PHASE 1: INITIAL DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS</p>	<p>PARTICIPATORY ANALYSIS: SELECTING, CONTEXTUALIZING, & CODIFYING (Wang & Burris, 1997)</p>	<p>6 Photovoice Focus Groups at BorderClick Fall 2016- Spring 2017</p>	<p>CONSTANT COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (Charmaz, 2014)</p>
<p>PHASE 2: FOCUSED DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS</p>	<p>Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine 2000-2001)</p>	<p>5 Photovoice Focus Groups at TSAP Spring 2019- Spring 2020</p>	
<p>PHASE 3: AXIAL DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS</p>	<p>PERCEPTUAL, STRUCTURAL & IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (Serafini, 2010)</p>	<p>20 Photovoice One-on-One Interviews Summer 2020</p>	

Figure 2. Photovoice Grounded Theory Data Collection and Analysis Research Design

Data Collection

In this research design, data collection and analysis were conducted interconnectedly. In this section, I first present how data was collected, and I further elaborate on how the data was analyzed in the following sections of this chapter. All photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews were facilitated in English, Spanish, Spanglish, and in the translanguaging between all three languages. Translanguaging between English, Spanish and Spanglish was encouraged and welcomed at BorderClick and at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), where the photovoice focus groups were conducted for this dissertation study. The leaders from BorderClick, TSAP and I are Transfronterizxs, native and fluent speakers in English, Spanish and Spanglish, and we applied translanguaging between all three languages to create a welcoming environment where Transfronterizx students could feel free to express themselves in the languages that they preferred to speak. I also welcomed and applied translanguaging between

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English, Spanish and Spanglish with participants during the photovoice one-on-one interviews via zoom for this dissertation study.

Phase One: Initial Data Collection. The initial phase of data collection was implemented during the Fall 2016-Spring 2017 school year at the BorderClick program in the AjA Project. A total of six photovoice focus groups were implemented with the leadership of Rebecca, Josemar and me. The photovoice focus groups were part of a larger participatory photography art project dedicated to amplifying the voices of Transfronterizx students through a digital living archive and photography exhibitions centered on their lived experiences as Transfronterizx people. I invited Transfronterizx students from the BorderClick program to participate in this study via email (Appendix A) and through informed consent (Appendix B). Additionally, I invited participants to submit a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C) to obtain information about their backgrounds and academic trajectories. A total of 13 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education participated in this dissertation study.

The photovoice focus groups were designed to cover broad spectrums in their transborder lives, ranging from their top 10 favorite things about living a transborder life to cultural symbols that embodied their transborder identity. Borderclick participants received verbal and written instructions about the selection of their photographs and topics of discussion prior to each photovoice focus group meeting. The topics for the photovoice focus groups were decided upon collectively with the participants of the BorderClick program. In this phase, a total of 361 participatory photographs were collected, ranging from 5 to 40 photos for each participant. All photographs were analyzed and discussed with participants through participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and

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perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). The application of VTS further supported dialogue about their participatory photography and broad discussions about their transborder identity. Additionally, as professional photographers, Rebecca and Josemar provided guidance about the composition of the participants' photographs through perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis that led further discussions and meaning makings about participants' transborder lives and identities.

Like the participants, Rebecca, Josemar and I also engaged in the reflection of our own photographs and both instructed and participated in the photovoice focus groups. Aligned with photovoice analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), the photovoice focus groups were informed by a critically conscious approach to teaching where, through dialogue, the students also served in the role of the teacher and the teacher served in the role of the student (Freire, 1970/1993). This approach was particularly significant during the photovoice analysis, where students gave meaning through their dialogue to the photographs that represented their transborder cultural identity. Moreover, as part of the reciprocal learning process, Rebecca, Josemar and I also engaged in selecting our own photographs and participated in dialogue about our transborder cultural identity.

During the photovoice focus groups, Rebecca, Josemar and I encouraged participants to discuss the meanings of their images and how the images visually represented their transborder cultural identity. Discussions centered on eliciting broad perspectives about the participants' transborder identities. The participants identified salient themes illustrated throughout their images that best represented their transborder identity. The salient transborder cultural identity themes that the participants identified are further illustrated in figure 3.

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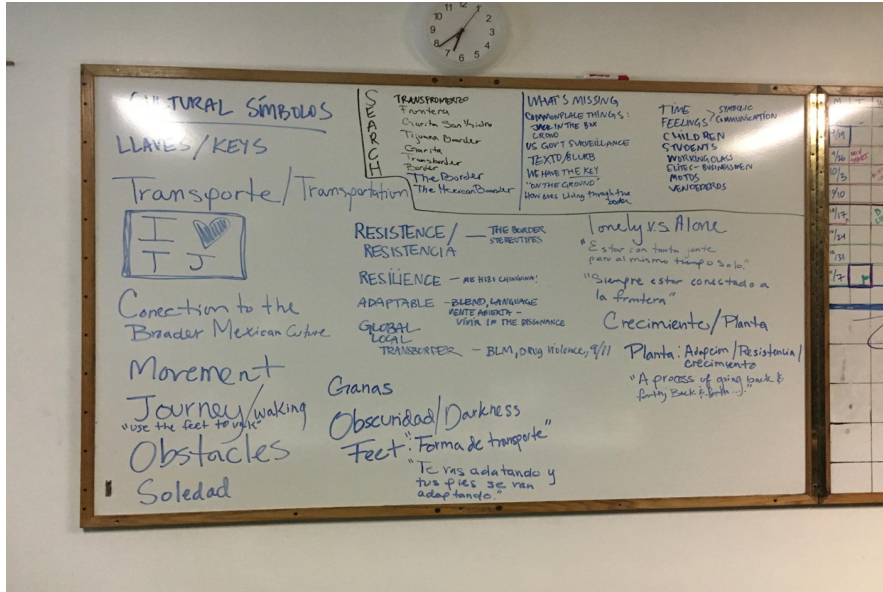


Figure 3. Salient Transborder Cultural Identity Themes

Following the initial phase of data collection, I also implemented an initial grounded theory analysis of the transcribed photovoice focus groups from the Borderclick program. The themes identified in this initial phase of data collection informed my decision to focus phase two of data collection on the intersections of a transborder identity in order to critically examine transborder identity development. The grounded theory analysis of this initial phase of data collection is further illustrated in the “*Initial, Focused and Axial Analysis*” section of this chapter.

Phase Two: Focused Data Collection. This focused phase of data collection was implemented from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020 at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), in San Diego State University (SDSU), where I serve as founding director. I implemented a total of five photovoice focus groups. Similarly, to the previous phase, the photovoice focus groups were part of the larger programming at TSAP, dedicated to creating inclusive campus climates for Transfronterizx students by educating postsecondary and higher education campus communities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands about the Transfronterizx student population. I invited Transfronterizx students from TSAP to participate in this study via email (Appendix A) and

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through informed consent (Appendix B). Additionally, I invited participants to submit a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C) to obtain information about their backgrounds and academic trajectories. A total of 11 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education participated in phase two of this research design. Additionally, previous participants from phase two also participated in this phase of data collection.

In this phase, I applied participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997) by regarding participants as the experts of their lived experiences and the Transfronterizx student population. As a result, I facilitated the photovoice focus groups with an emphasis on amplifying the voices of the participants by creating visibility about their transborder lives, salient social identities, challenges and resiliencies through their photographs and narratives. In this phase of data collection, the photovoice focus groups were centered on examining the intersections of a transborder identity, yet the topics of discussion were broadly explored and selected consensually with the participants. The topics and emphasis of the photovoice focus groups ranged from discussions about the cultural representations of their transborder identity to specifically exploring the intersections of their transborder identity.

In this phase, a total of 103 participatory photographs were collected, ranging from two to 26 photographs provided by each participant. All photographs were analyzed and discussed with participants through participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). I applied VTS to facilitate broad and focused discussions on emerging topics on intersectionality. Additionally, I applied perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis to examine the composition of photographs and to further explore emergent discussions focused on Transfronterizx students' intersectionalities between their transborder identities and social

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identities represented in their photos. The skills I learned about photography and interpreting photographs at BorderClick provided me with a thorough understanding of applying perceptual, structural and ideological analysis with participants in the reflections of their photographs. Additionally, my previous training in counseling, and intentional interviewing provided me with a skill set to balancing open discussions while also centering conversations on topics of intersectionalities. Like the previous phase, the photovoice focus groups were also transcribed, and I analyzed the transcripts line-by-line through initial and focused grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The codes and themes generated in phase one and phase two of data collection informed the data collection materials (appendices D-K) for phase three of this research design. The grounded theory analysis of this focused phase of data collection is further illustrated in the “*Initial, Focused and Axial Analysis*” section of this chapter.

Phase Three: Axial Data Collection. I conducted the third phase of data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the Summer of 2020, by facilitating 20 photovoice one-on-one interviews via zoom. In this phase, I recruited participants from the Estudiantes Transfronterizxs Facebook Group, the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO), BorderClick and TSAP. These organizations are centered on creating safe spaces of community, inclusion and validation for Transfronterizx youth at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. I invited current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education from these programs and organizations to participate in photovoice one-on-one interviews via a recruitment flyer (Appendix D), a recruitment email (Appendix E) and an informed consent (Appendix F). Additionally, I invited participants to submit a demographics questionnaire (Appendix G) to obtain information about their background and academic trajectories.

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I served as founder of the Estudiantes Transfronterizxs Facebook Group, TASO and TSAP and as an education consultant for the BorderClick program. As a result, over the last five years, I had established rapport as a peer-mentor with the Transfronterizx students of these organizations that led to their support and trust to participate in a photovoice one-on-one interview for my dissertation study. Additionally, the established rapport led to profound, sincere and candid conversations about their transborder lives, social identities and academic trajectories. The photovoice interview protocols (Appendices H-K) designed for this phase of data collection were centered on further examining the relationship of themes and codes generated in the initial phases of data collection.

In this phase of data collection, a total of 227 participatory photographs were collected, ranging from two to 35 photographs provided by each participant. All photographs were analyzed and discussed with participants via photovoice one-on-one interviews informed by participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). Participatory analysis was informed by two interview prompts (Appendices H & J) that guided participants in selecting their photographs for their photovoice one-on-one interview based on salient themes about their transborder identity and the relationship between the intersections of their social identities. The photographs and themes they selected guided the topics of discussions during the photovoice one-on-one interviews.

VTS (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001) was also instrumental in centering conversations about their photographs to the relationship between their transborder lives and social identities. Additionally, for one participant who found it awkward to have a conversation via zoom, VTS significantly helped both of us to break the ice and settle into having a discussion online. Due to

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COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, it was necessary to facilitate the photovoice interviews online instead of in-person. Perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010) was also instrumental during the discussions about the compositions of the photographs and meaning making about the visual content. For example, themes that were generated through perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis were the in-vivo themes, “Borders are Not Natural” and “Borders are Man Made, Just Like Racism.” Like the prior phases of data collection, the photovoice one-on-one interviews were also transcribed, and I analyzed the transcripts line-by-line through axial coding, as well as initial and focused coding for emergent themes that might have not otherwise been explored (Charmaz, 2014). The analysis of this phase and the previous phase of data collection is further explored in the following sections.

Participatory Analysis

In photovoice, Wang and Burris (1997) provide a three-state participatory analysis process facilitated in large and small group discussions involving participants in: (1) the selection of their photographs, (2) the contextualizing of their photographs in storytelling, and (3) in the meaning making of their photographs by codifying through dialogue “issues, themes, or theories” (p. 381). Wang’s and Burris’ three-stage participatory analysis process was applied in the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews facilitated in the three phases of data collection and analysis of this dissertation study. Participatory analysis was an integral method to engaging participants in the empowerment of ascribing meaning to their transborder identities informed by their stories and photographs. Additionally, the discussions facilitated during the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews were further informed by Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001).

Visual Thinking Strategies

Housen and Yenawine (2000–2001) co-founded the *Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)* curriculum as a teaching strategy for visual literacy. Since then, this curriculum has been widely applied as an effective teaching strategy in education throughout the United States (Yenawine, 2013; Shifrin 2008). Hailey, et al. (2015) provide a comprehensive VTS protocol informed by Housen’s and Yenawine’s (2000–2001) curriculum. Hailey, et al. (2015) explain that the VTS protocol “was developed over an iterative process of testing and using data to make revisions that lasted 10 years, beginning in 1991” (p. 56). The VTS protocol presents “three specific research-tested questions to motivate and maintain the inquiry” (Hailey, et al., 2015, p. 56):

- What’s going on/happening in this picture? (Asked once to initiate the discussion)
- What do you see that makes you say that? (Asked whenever an interpretive comment is made)
- What more can you/we find? (Asked frequently throughout the discussion to broaden and deepen the search for meaning)

The VTS protocol is designed to engage participants in the reflection of visual content by first making simple observations to building on complex and profound interpretations of visual content.

Interconnectedly, I applied VTS with participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997) in the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews facilitated in the three phases of data collection and analysis of this dissertation study. VTS was instrumental to engaging participants to reflect upon their participatory photographs centered on their transborder experiences, academic trajectories and social identities. Another instrumental methodology to engaging participants to reflect upon their photographs was Serafini’s (2010) three-part

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framework for analyzing multimodal texts: (a) perceptual, (b) structural and (c) ideological analysis.

Perceptual, Structural & Ideological Analysis

Serafini (2010) provides a three-part framework, foundational for analyzing and comprehending multimodal texts: (a) perceptual, (b) structural and (c) ideological analysis. The three analytical perspectives are utilized simultaneously, and one individually is “insufficient in and of itself” (p. 85). A *perceptual analytical perspective* involves participants in “direct inspection, or close attention to the literal aspects of an image” (p. 92), such as “naming the visual elements of a multimodal text and taking an inventory of its contents” (p. 92). For example, a perceptual analytical approach involved participants in naming and noticing the borders, font, composition and/or elements of design. A perceptual analytical approach is an initial step in analyzing multimodal texts, and it is utilized for calling attention to elements of design that may at times be overlooked.

A *structural analytical perspective* is “affected by the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which we interpret and compose multimodal texts” (Serafini, 2010, p.89). Moreover, a structural perspective is the understanding of the relationship “among various visual structures or grammars and the meanings associated with them in a given culture” (p.96). For example, participants might consider the relationship between characters in an image. An *ideological analytical perspective* is the “shift from interpreting images through the recognition of the codes and conventions used in the creation of visual images, and to considering the socio-cultural contexts of production and reception in addition to the image itself” (p.99).

In this dissertation study, perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010) enhanced the implementation of participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997) and Visual

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Thinking Strategies (Hailey, et al., 2015). Similar to the case in participatory analysis and VTS, I applied perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010) in the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews facilitated in the three phases of data collection and analysis of this dissertation study. Perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis was instrumental to analyzing the composition of the participants' photographs and noticing content and interpretations that could have otherwise been missed if only participatory analysis and VTS would have been applied.

Initial, Focused and Axial Analysis

Grounded theory consists of three phases of analysis: initial, focused, and axial (Charmaz, 2014). Initial grounded theory analysis consists of an open coding phase where a researcher examines salient categories (Charmaz, 2014). "In the open coding phase, the researcher examines the text (e.g., transcripts, field notes, documents) for salient categories of information supported by the text" (Creswell, 2013; p.195). In this dissertation study, the themes and meanings that Transfronterizx students ascribed to their transborder identity during the photovoice focus groups and participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010) informed the open codes and salient categories generated during the first phase of this research design.

Additionally, the photovoice focus groups were transcribed through bilingual professional transcription services, and I reviewed each transcript for accuracy. I analyzed the transcripts line-by-line through open coding through the qualitative analysis software Dedoose. I applied open coding in addition to focus coding by further informing the themes identified by participants during the photovoice focus groups. Additionally, I utilized the salient categories

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identified by participants during the photovoice focus groups on this initial phase of data collection and analysis to inform the second phase of collection and analysis with a focus on intersectionality.

Charmaz (2014) explains that, “focus coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorizing your data incisively and completely” (p. 138). During the initial phase of data collection and analysis, I began to analyze themes relating to Transfronterizx students’ intersectionalities between their social identities and transborder identity. As a result, I realized that to critically examine Transfronterizx students’ transborder identity development, it was important to explore intersectionality. Hence, intersectionality became the focus of data collection and analysis for phase two of this research design. In grounded theory, both initial and focused coding are considered emergent processes in research, as new codes and themes can develop (Charmaz, 2014). During phases one and two of data collection and analysis, I applied both initial and focused coding and a constant comparative of codes, themes, focus groups, and photographs.

In grounded theory analysis, “axial coding aims to link categories with subcategories and asks how they are related” (148). Informed by grounded theory, the third phase of data collection and analysis was centered on further examining the relationship between the themes generated during the initial focused data collection and analysis phases of this research design. As a result, I created two, two-part photovoice interview prompts and protocols informed by the initial themes generated in this dissertation study. The two parts of the photovoice interview protocols consisted of: (1) two interview prompts informed by photovoice analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997) that provided participants with a guide to selecting their images for the one-on-one interview; and (2) two interview protocols informed by Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen &

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Yenawine, 2000–2001). Informed by the initial phase of data collection and analysis, the photovoice interview protocols were design to further examine the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity. The first photovoice interview prompt and protocol was designed to examine the intersections of a transborder identity, and the second photovoice interview prompt and protocol was designed to examine the developmental processes of a transborder identity.

Similar to the initial phases of data collection and analysis, the one-on-one interviews were also transcribed through professional bilingual transcription services, and I analyzed the transcripts line-by-line through the qualitative analysis software Dedoose. I also implemented axial coding of the transcribed one-on-one interviews by conceptually linking relationships between categories (Charmaz, 2014). Axial coding is conducted by reviewing salient themes and sub-themes and identifying specific categories that illustrate the influential factors of a phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). More specifically, Strauss and Corbin propose a systematic approach to making links between categories that include “*conditions*, the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomenon; *actions/interactions*, participants’ routine or strategic responses to issues, events, or problems; and *consequences*, outcomes of actions/interactions” (as cited in Charmaz, 2014; p. 148). I used Straus’ and Corbin’s approach to making links between categories in order to systematically analyze and elicit responses from participants, focused on making connections between categories and themes that highlight the developmental process of their transborder identity and the intersections of their social identities. Through this third phase of data collection and analysis, I continued to implement open coding for any new themes and categories that might

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have not been previously identified and that could possibly support the grounded theory construction of a transborder identity development model.

Constant Comparative Analysis

Researchers use a constant comparative approach to try to saturate categories by “looking for instances that represent the category” (Creswell, 2013; p.195). As a result, “these categories are composed of subcategories, called ‘properties,’ that represent multiple perspectives about the categories” (Creswell, 2013; p.195). I applied constant comparative analysis in all three phases of data collection and analysis by comparing photovoice focus groups, photovoice one-on-one interviews, themes, codes and photographs. During phase one and phase two, a constant comparative analysis was key to implementing theoretical sampling by focusing on the research design to examining the intersections of a transborder identity. Constant comparative analysis also informed axial coding by further examining the relationship between themes, as well as the emergent findings of *development* illustrated as an interwoven finding illustrated throughout the themes and sub-themes of the grounded theory model of this dissertation study.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Creswell (2007) states that validity in qualitative research is the assessment of the accuracy of the findings “as best described by the researcher and participants” (p.207). In this dissertation study, I applied three validity strategies —triangulation, member checking and bracketing.

Triangulation

Triangulation is achieved by collecting data in multiple methodological approaches and sources in order to explore a phenomenon through multiple dimensions (Ely et al., 1991; Patton, 1990). In order to examine the intersections and developmental process of a transborder identity

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through multiple methodological approaches, I implemented photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews. I also collected participatory photographs and questionnaires. I transcribed the interviews and analyzed the data through the computer software Dedoose and coded the data line-by-line to establish reliability (Creswell, 2007).

Member Check

In order to establish member checking, a researcher seeks the participants' views about the credibility and interpretation of the findings (Ely et al., 1991; Patton, 1990). In order to establish member checking, I interpreted and analyzed the participants' images with the participants through participatory analysis (Wang and Burris, 1997), Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2000–2001), and perceptual, structural, and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). I also emailed the participants the quotes and analysis of their photovoice one-on-one interviews and photovoice focus groups and confirmed with them my analysis of their statements in order to ensure accuracy of the findings.

Bracketing

Creswell (2013) explains that, “the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study” (p. 83). I applied various approaches to bracketing and reflecting on my own identity as a Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Firstly, during the photovoice focus groups at BorderClick and at TSAP, I also participated in the photovoice focus groups and reflected on my own photographs along with participants. This was strategic in establishing a critically conscious (Freire, 1970/1993) approach to photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997) as I also served in the role of the student by learning from the participants when reflecting on my own images. I did not include my photographs and reflections in the findings of this dissertation study. However, these

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reflections significantly informed the writing of my positionality statement, included in chapter one of this dissertation study. Consequently, my positionality statement narrative provides further triangulation of the findings, as pivotal moments, resiliencies and challenges I faced throughout my transborder life and academic trajectory were also challenges that participants revealed encountering in their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Lastly, on October 2018, I created an Instagram account titled, *Reflections from the Frontier*, dedicated to further reflecting on my transborder identity and environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. This account provided me with a space to further reflect on my transborder identity outside of the photovoice focus groups at BorderClick and TSAP. Openly reflecting on social media about my transborder identity was also strategic to creating visibility about life at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands for other Transfronterizxs who might also find relevance and validation through my reflections. These photographs and reflections also informed the writing process of my positionality statement.

Limitation

As most studies, this study is not without limitations. Selection bias was a limitation in this study due to the data collection and recruitment sites; most of the Transfronterizx students who participated in this study were part of the BorderClick, TASO, and TSAP programs and organizations, where I also served in leadership. Another limitation was homogeneity in ethnicity: most participants were of Mexican-American ethnic background. Only three participants were of diverse ethnic backgrounds; they identified as Salvadorian Mexican-American, White-American, and Ilokano and German-Jewish. The participants of this dissertation study are further highlighted in chapter five of this dissertation study.

CHAPTER 4: BEYOND DATA COLLECTION & RECRUITMENT SITES

The recruitment sites for this study were at the Estudiantes Transfronterizxs Facebook Group, the BorderClick Program at the AjA Project, the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) and the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), both at San Diego State University. Data Collection was facilitated at the BorderClick program during the Fall 2016-Spring 2017 school year, at TSAP in Spring 2019-2020, and via zoom in Summer 2020. Beyond data collection and recruitment sites, these programs and organization served as safe spaces of inclusion, validation and leadership for the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation study. These programs and organizations are student-led grassroots initiatives served by the Transfronterizx community and are also some of the few existing spaces with efforts focused on fostering the success of Transfronterizx students in high school, postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. The following is more information about the backgrounds and missions of the programs, organizations and initiatives.

Estudiantes Transfronterizxs' Facebook Group

I created the Facebook Group, “Estudiantes Transfronterizxs” in April 2015, as an initiative informed by a participatory action research study (Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020). The purpose of this group is to create a virtual community among Transfronterizx college students, recent graduates and allies by addressing relevant topics significant to the Transfronterizx community at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. At the time of the inception of this Facebook group and until recently this has been a virtual space of engagement and recruitment for Transfronterizx student programming at BorderClick, TASO and TSAP.

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BorderClick

BorderClick is a digital living archive exploring the complexities of the Transfronterizx experience. BorderClick was co-founded by artists Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga and Rebecca Goldschmidt. In collaboration with the AjA project, they ran a series of workshops through 2016 and 2017 with Transfronterizx youth living their lives between Tijuana and San Diego, commuting constantly between both nations. Borderclick's mission aims to give lyrical visual representation to transfronterizx life through photography, 360 video, and social media. By capturing the feelings, memories and experiences of living between two cultures and nations, Mexico and the United States, they bring an authentic and honest challenge to the common stereotypes of "border-crossers." Throughout this process of self-exploration, they have discovered that despite the intentionally isolating effects of the physical border wall, the challenge of crossing it on a daily basis, and its extensive violence upon their minds and bodies, they have managed to find and connect with one another to help visualize an otherwise invisible community. They have learned how to collaborate and engage others in dialogue around border issues. They pledge to continue to support and advocate for their communities in the pursuit of self-improvement, social justice, and civic engagement.

Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization

The Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) was established in 2017 at San Diego State University (SDSU). I served as founder and present of TASO for four years, from implementing a participatory action research study utilized to establish the student organization in 2015, to formally serving as president from 2017-2019 (Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020). I began the implementation process of TASO in 2015 through a two-year trajectory inquiry phase, informed by participatory action research focused on investigating the needs of

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Transfronterizx students at SDSU. In 2016, Jesus Ortiz joined TASO as a founding member and began outreach efforts for the establishment of the student organization. Since its inception, TASO has created inclusive, equitable, culturally relevant and safe spaces for Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The mission of TASO is to create an inclusive campus environment for SDSU students who live a transborder lifestyle in the U.S.-Mexico border region. TASO is focused on providing validating experiences to SDSU students who live a transborder life by implementing activities, services and programs relevant to their transborder experiences, identity and culture. The Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization is a culturally based student organization designed to build community among SDSU students who live a transborder life in the U.S.-Mexico border region and allies.

Transborder Student Ally Program

The Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) was established in Fall 2018 through the Student Success Fee at San Diego State University (SDSU). Currently, I serve as founding director of TSAP, I first piloted the program in Spring 2018 through TASO at SDSU. The establishment and development of TSAP is in collaboration with Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions from the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The mission of TSAP is to create a visible network of culturally competent allies in higher education institutions, high schools and communities in the San Diego-Tijuana border region by educating faculty, staff, teachers, students and community leaders about the Transfronterizx student population. The goal of TSAP is to create inclusive campus environments for Transfronterizx students in higher education institutions and high schools at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by raising awareness and providing education about the Transfronterizx student population.

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Before the COVID-19 pandemic, TSAP was available at SDSU to faculty, staff, teachers, students, and community leaders campus wide and from local higher education institutions, high schools and community organizations in San Diego, CA. Currently, TSAP's ally trainings are available online to all educators nationwide and globally who want to learn about the Transfronterizx student population at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, currently TSAP is focused on implementing multimedia participatory storytelling initiatives, dedicated to creating culturally relevant leadership experiences for Transfronterizx youth at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, through digital engagement online. Photovoice and multimedia story telling is at the core of creating spaces of inclusion for Transfronterizx students online.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPANTS

A total of 32 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region participated in this study. All participants were U.S.-citizens, 19-34 years of age. A total of 17 participants identified as female, and 15 participants identified as male. Most participants identified ethnically as Mexican-American; one participant identified as Salvadorian-Mexican-American, one participant identified as White-American, and one participant identified as Ilokano and German-Jewish American. At the time of their participation in this study, their postsecondary and higher education status varied, from attending community colleges (N=7), higher education institutions (N=4), graduate studies (N=12) and alum (N=9). All participants attended postsecondary and higher education in San Diego, CA, some Transfronterizx students also pursued higher education in Tijuana, Baja California (N=7) through study abroad and binational citizenship, and one participant transferred to a university in Mexico obtaining a bachelor's degree. The photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews were centered on discussing their academic trajectories in postsecondary and higher education in the U.S. However, in order to wholistically explore these trajectories, we also discussed their experiences in education K-12 in both the U.S. and Mexico. For further description about the participants background, K-12 academic trajectories and postsecondary and higher education, please see appendices L-N.

Participants' initial transborder interactions varied; however, the three experiences most discussed were: (1) being born into a transborder life by forming part of families with established ties in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands; (2) facing displacement in the U.S. due to economic hardships and housing insecurities; and (3) facing the deportation of a family member and living at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to stay together. All Transfronterizx students who

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participated in this study are U.S.-citizens and crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border daily to continue their studies in the U.S. The beginnings of their academic trajectories while living transborder lives varied from K-12, postsecondary and higher education undergraduate, and graduate studies. All Transfronterizx students who participated in this study experienced attending postsecondary and higher education in the U.S.

In spite of their diversities, a commonality among Transfronterizx students was that their transborder lives had a long-lasting impression on their identities. Another commonality was their extensive civic leadership and solidarity efforts with their community and vulnerable communities living at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. These findings are further illustrated in chapter 6 of this dissertation study. The following is more information about the participants' postsecondary and higher education trajectories, as well as their accomplishments and leadership roles shared for this dissertation study.

Community College

Aaron Quetzal Diaz was born in Los Angeles, California and raised in Tijuana. He returned to the US at the age of 14 to attend high school. He is an industrial engineer and also holds a degree in Computer Aided Design. He currently works for a food manufacturer in Chula Vista, CA. His interests are in lean manufacturing and continuous improvement as a Process Engineer. With a foot on both sides of the border for the last 15 years of his life, Aaron has evolved from experiencing a sense of loneliness and isolation on either side, to finding community and connection in both places, primarily through his involvement in tango. At age 24, he began practicing this form of dance in both Tijuana and San Diego. He is now a respected DJ in both places, dancing and playing music at tango events that bring together dancers from both sides of the border. He is a founding member of the dance organization Milonga

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Cascabelito, with the goal of strengthening the tango community in Tijuana and expanding its reach within the tango community worldwide.

Borderat is a Film Artist at the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands. He is also a first-generation Transfronterizx college student who began his studies at San Diego City College. Previously, he served as a Student Ambassador at the BorderClick program in the AjA Project.

Edsel is a first-generation college student majoring in Civil Engineering at San Diego City College (SDCC). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, he has also been an essential worker balancing academics and civic leadership at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. He's served as Student Leader at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) at San Diego State University (SDSU) by presenting about his lived experiences as a Transfronterizo community college student in panel discussions in-person.

Isela is Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands. She is a first-generation college student and was majoring in photography and art at the Southwestern Community College (SWC) when she first participated in this study in 2016-2017. During that time, she also served as a Student Ambassador for the BorderClick program at the AjA Project. Since then, she continues to pursue photography; and, most recently, her photography work was selected as finalist for best photography on a national photographer's forum magazine.

Jhovanna was born in Orange County and raised in Tijuana, Baja California. She's crossed the U.S.-Mexico border since the age of 8 years old and lived between both nations with her mother. Currently, Jhovanna is a first-generation college student at Southwestern Community College (SWC), pursuing an Associate Degree (AA) in Sociology, with the goal of transferring to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She shares that her transborder life became more intense during her first year as a community college student, when she began to cross

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alone. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, she is also an essential worker that is balancing academics and civic leadership in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. She's served as Student Leader at the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU) by presenting about her lived experiences as a Transfronteriza community college student in panel discussions online and in-person. Jhovanna has also been involved in Puente at SWC by guiding Chicanx students through college life on-campus. Jhovanna aspires to graduate with a Bachelor of the Arts (B.A.) degree in Sociology from UCLA and continue her studies as a Ph.D. student.

Katz is currently a first-generation college student Majoring in Sustainability, Emphasis in Environmental Studies at San Diego City College. She has work experience in environmental issues in both San Diego, CA, and Baja California. She is dedicated to learning how to protect the environment in both California and Baja California.

Viviana is a San Diego based freelance theatre artist breaking into the entertainment industry. She was raised in the city of Tijuana and was always fascinated by the richness of the artistic scene in the region. She is a first-generation college graduate, and at the time that she participated in this study, she was a first-year community college student. Inspired by her upbringing and the culture around her, she decided to pursue a career in the arts and received a Double Major in Theatre Arts from San Diego State University in 2020. Viviana's transborder experience informs all of the facets of her artistic work. She has been a part of Las Fotos Project, the Borderclick photography collective, and most recently, Amigos del REP, a theatre council that promotes Latinx theatre in San Diego. At the time that she participated

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Higher Education

Arden O. Martinez was born in the U.S. and raised in Tijuana, Baja California. She works for the International Community Foundation to serve communities across the Border, Mexico, and Latin America. She calls herself a Transfronteriza. When she was 15 years old, she began to cross the border for her high school studies, without knowing the future challenges that she would encounter. She went to Southwestern Community College to pursue a career in politics, transferring to Point Loma Nazarene University, where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Political Science. Her experience as a Political Organizer, Political Director and Food Security Intern has shaped her disposition to understand why communities experience lack of resources and education.

Leonardo grew-up as Transfronterizo foster youth from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Currently, he is studying Mechanical Engineering at CSULB. He recently transferred from Southwestern Community College. He studied abroad in Germany. Unfortunately, he had to end his studies abroad due to COVID-19, however, he is looking forward to furthering his career abroad once the world is in a better place. He is also an electronic music producer and DJ. Over the last 15 year, he has performed live at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and the greater Mexico and the U.S.

Nanitzia is a Transfronteriza and Transnational student pursuing a double-major in Communication and International Studies Political Science at UC San Diego. She grew up in Tijuana, Mexico, and after graduating from high school, she decided to pursue a higher education in the U.S. As a transnational student, she began to cross the border frequently and this interaction gave her a new perspective of the world. She explains that her passion for immigration came with her awareness of the responsibilities that come with the privileges she is

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granted every day. This has made her committed to lending her voice to those who are not able to speak up by themselves, especially at these uncertain times. She hopes that she will be able to combine her passion for immigration and the media to collectively create change through media involved projects, activism, and policies.

Vanessa is a Double Major in Theater and Dance at the University of California, San Diego. She transferred from San Diego City College. Her transborderism became more consistent when she started to cross to attend college and study in San Diego. She has served as a student ambassador with BorderClick, a digital living archive of transborder experiences from the non-profit organization, The AJA Project, that focused on documenting the life of the transborder community and bringing life to the issues of the struggles the community goes through. She serves as the Graphic Designer at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP), and she formerly served as a student leader of the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU). TASO is focused on providing an inclusive campus environment for the Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to help them succeed in their education and careers. She is also thrilled to be serving at TSAP, where she supports in creating awareness to faculty and staff about the Transfronterizx student community, by teaching them how to be a transborder student allies.

Graduate Studies

Anette is a doctoral student at Pepperdine University and a Student Affairs Educator in Learning Technologies. She is Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and has served as a student ambassador at the BorderClick program in the AjA Project and a student leader at the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU).

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Armando is a Student Affairs Educator and received his M.A. in Higher Education Emphasis in Student Affairs in 2017. He is also a first-generation college graduate and community college transfer student. He is Transfronterizx from the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands. Previously, he served as a Student Ambassador for the BorderClick program at the AjA Project and as a Student Leader at the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) in San Diego State University (SDSU).

David Alvarado is a candidate for the master's degree in Education. David worked for South Bay Community Services as an Intensive Intervention Specialist in the Chula Vista region, where he helped students, mainly ELD students, improve academic scores and perform in school. Many of those students were transborder students, and he used his personal experiences to aid in their success. In 2014, he graduated from San Diego State University with a bachelor's degree in Latin American Studies. Prior to earning his undergraduate degree, David attended Southwestern Community College. Being born in East Los Angeles, David grew up in a politically active community. He moved to the Tijuana/San Diego region by the age of 7. He grew up living the transborder lifestyle into his college career. "La Frontera" shaped his world view, and he strives to serve this community through higher education.

Dennis J. Arreola is an Employment Program Representative for the State of California. He is currently attending his last course in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Program and is also a candidate for the Master of Arts in Higher Education Leadership at the University of San Diego. He was born and raised in the San Diego - Tijuana Region. He's a first-generation college student and obtained a double Bachelor of Arts in Latin American Studies and Spanish at San Diego State University. His personal background experience as a Transfronterizo and his active involvement in the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO)

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strengthened his passion to continue efforts of supporting underrepresented student communities who seek visibility, inclusion, and supportive programs in higher education

Ivette Lorona was born and raised in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. She is a third generation Transfronteriza and the first in her family to receive an education in the United States. In 2017, Ivette received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a Double Minor in Biology and Counseling and Social Change from San Diego State University. She is a third-year graduate student in the dual Master of Public Health - Health Promotion and Behavioral Science and Master of Arts in Latin American Studies program at San Diego State University. Ivette works as a student worker for the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, where she supports the Office of Border Health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she provided weekly binational reports on San Diego-Tijuana's regional COVID-19 impact to local and state leadership. Her passion for social justice and family's generational transborder experience drives her research to uncover the structural violence impacting the quality of life of transborder citizens in the San Diego-Tijuana transborder region. Ivette aspires to continue to a PhD program and to advocate for the intersection of social justice within public health to eliminate systemic barriers that influence transborder health disparities.

Isaac identifies as a Mexican-American who lives a transborder lifestyle. He grew up in Mexico. His curiosity for science developed ever since he witnessed a chemical reaction as a little child. From then on, he knew he wanted to become a scientist to be able to understand and manipulate matter the way nature does. His parents made the sacrifice to support him in his transborder education, so that he could obtain an education with more opportunities in the field of science. Since that moment, the border became part of his life. Starting in elementary school and up to college, he crossed the border every day to attend school. However, it was not until he

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reached the university level that he was able to afford housing in the United States. He has obtained a bachelor's degree and is currently in his first year of study towards achieving a master's degree in Biochemistry, while also looking forward to the possibility of acquiring a doctorate degree.

Jovita Cerda recently obtained her Masters in School Counseling at the University of San Diego. In 2018, she received a B.A. in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside. She has lived a transborder lifestyle since the age of 8 years old, after the deportation of her father. Her two homes are located in Tijuana and San Ysidro (a border town in which the population shares a similar way of living). She has a passion for working with non-traditional students and conducted research on how school counselors can serve as changemakers in the education system.

Luis Chavez Rodriguez's pronouns are he, him, his, and self-identifies as a queer, transborder person of color. He is a Masters' student in the School Based Clinical Counseling Program at USD. He transferred from San Diego City Community College and earned a bachelor's degree in Chicana/o Studies from SDSU in 2019. Luis was born and raised in San Diego, CA, until the age of 18. After his father's deportation, he moved to Tijuana, BC and has lived a transborder life since then.

Perla is Transfronteriza from the San Diego Tijuana border region. She transferred from Mesa College to SDSU, where she graduated with a GPA of 4.0, obtaining a bachelor's in liberal studies with Emphasis in Math. She is currently in the Bilingual Single Subject Credential Program at SDSU.

Ricardo is a second-year master's student in Latin American Studies at San Diego State University. He obtained his degree in Anthropology from the same institution. Before that, he

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attended Southwestern College and transferred with an Associate Degree in Anthropology. He grew up in Mexico, along the border region of Tijuana-San Diego. He became a transborder student at the early age of 14. His rigorous routine consisted of waking up at 4:00 am to be at the border at 5:00 am and then wait in the long line to cross into the United States through the San Ysidro port of entry. This was followed by a scramble to catch the blue line trolley to Downtown San Diego to be in school before 7:30 am. The return to his home presented its own similar set of challenges. The everyday transition between these two very different worlds made him aware of the socio-economic and cultural differences that existed between both countries. It made him question the dynamic situation in which he was living and the complexity of leading a transborder lifestyle. His transborder lifestyle has informed and guided both his professional and academic trajectory. His ultimate goal is to become a scholar of language learning and development. He is interested in exploring the linguistic experiences of Hispanic students when they first move to the United States, especially their experiences with language anxiety while acquiring the majority's language. He is currently working on his thesis, which focuses on this topic. He's also collaborating with a faculty member from the University of San Diego on a research project. Additionally, He was named semi-finalist for a Fulbright scholarship, and he hopes to be moving to Spain at the end of the year to pursue a second masters' degree

Trudy was a doctoral student when she first participated in this study in 2017. During this time, she began to live a transborder life. She served as a student ambassador in the BorderClick program at the Aja Project and as treasurer for the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU). Since then, she has graduated with a Ph.D. in Education.

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Ulises Leal is currently a graduate student at San Diego State University, working on his master's degree. He transferred from Santa Barbara City College in 2015. At SDSU, he completed his Bachelor's. Since transferring in 2015, Ulises started living a transborder lifestyle. Ulises was an SDSU Aztec Research Fellow at CCEAL, where he conducted qualitative research with a team of scholars. His research is focused on community college faculty who teach men of color. Most recently, he presented his research team's study, "Faculty as Institutional Agents," at SDSU 2016 Student Research Symposium. Additionally, he was granted the SDSU SRS President's Award for his research study at CCEAL.

Alumni

Ale Uzarraga is a transborder photographer born in San Diego, CA. She was raised and is currently living in Tijuana, B.C., Ale has studied higher education in both the U.S. and Mexico. In 2006 she studied photography at Southwestern Community College. She studied the technical photography career in South Mexico (2009 - 2011). With more than 9 years of experience, she has practiced this art in different ways, mainly in the capture of landscapes. In order to make her work more impactful and meaningful, she recently completed an Art Therapy certification in Mexico that makes her work with the community more intentional by using her lens and knowledge to create projects with awareness and educating communities in San Diego and Tijuana about emotional awareness through the tool of photography. She makes use of her photography as exploration and expansion tools to generate a social impact and transform social environments.

Alejandro Martinez is a San Diego-born photographer from the South Bay. He was raised on both sides of the border. He is a first-generation American citizen living in a predominantly Mexican household and has always considered cultural identity to be a central

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theme in his photography. He has been a student in the San Diego City College Photography Department. Currently, he is a teaching artist with the AJA Project and a member of Borderclick: a transborder participatory photography project based in City Heights, San Diego.

Joaquín Vázquez is a policy advisor, activist and community organizer. He is a first-generation Mexican American, born and raised by working-class undocumented immigrant parents in the unceded Kumeyaay land known as City Heights, in San Diego, CA. His efforts have focused on bringing justice for the working-class and marginalized families living in poverty, including fighting against displacement, for environmental justice, immigration reform, and achieving equitable public education. He's organized individually, as part of movements such as Occupy, and in various progressive advocacy organizations, including the Peace Resource Center and Organizing for Action. Joaquín has served in various federal government policy positions, working on economic, environmental, and labor policy under President Obama's administration. Prior to that he worked fighting for refugee justice and aided in an effort to include the voices of the most vulnerable countries in the policy development process upon the United Nations and World Trade Organization to help get a seat at the table. Most recently, Joaquín ran for Congress to represent the people of California's 53rd District of U.S. House of Representatives, challenging incumbent Democrat, Rep. Susan Davis, with an unapologetic people-first progressive agenda, including the Green New Deal, Medicare For All, criminal justice and immigration reform. He holds a Bachelor's in Political Science and International Relations focused on Economics from the University of California at Davis, and a Master's in Public Policy and Administration with a Global Policy concentration from Northwestern University

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John recently graduated with a B.S. in Biology from San Diego State University. He first began to live a transborder life during his last year of high school. He has served extensively in leadership roles for creating inclusive spaces for Transfronterizx students as former co-vice president for the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO). He has also served as a student ambassador for the BorderClick program at the AjA Project.

Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga is a Multi-Disciplinary Artist & Community Organizer with extensive experience in both the Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California, regions. He currently works with various independent artistic organizations on both sides of the border to help educate and enrich using the arts as a means of communication. The majority of his work deals with documentation, storytelling, and deconstruction of human experiences through the use of video, photography, installation, audio, technology, and various creative mediums. He joined The AjA Project in 2011, a City-Heights based non-profit that works with diverse communities of San Diego; there he worked as a Media Artist and later became Creative Director, where he supported in the development of innovative and creative projects, including the prestigious California Arts Council Innovations and Intersections Grant to further the organizations mission and growth up until Fall of 2020. In 2014, he founded PASE Music, a concert production company focused on creating the best experiences for music lovers in the city and created a bi-national music and arts festival in Tijuana, Mexico that brings together artist communities from both sides of the Mexico-US border. He is co-founder and current member of BorderClick, a participatory art collective founded in 2016 that workshops with Transborder communities creating a digital living archive of Transborder experiences through the use of media arts, education and performance; supported by the California Arts Council, California Humanities, and The California Endowment. He has shown work in Mexico, the United States, Japan, and

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Germany. His latest installation is titled, “Transcending Perception,” and it is currently up for view at San Diego's Liberty Station in Point Loma, California.

Jocelyne Olguin grew up not only bilingual but also bicultural. She was born in the United States but was raised in Mexico, with a binational upbringing in the borderlands of Sonora and Arizona. She commuted every day from her hometown in Nogales, Sonora to attend school in Nogales, Arizona. In 2013 she moved to San Diego to attend the University of San Diego. During college, Jocelyne found her passion for social justice and her love for community engagement. In 2015, she became a student leader for the Beyond Borders team at the Mulvaney Center for Community, Awareness and Social Action, where she hoped to spread awareness about border issues. In this role, she coordinated immersion trips in both the San Diego and Tijuana regions, as well as visits to unaccompanied minors’ shelters. In May 2017, she graduated with a BA in Business Administration and a Minor in Political Science. After college she spent two years as an AmeriCorps Volunteer with Bayside Community Center and Via International. She is now back at USD working full time with the Mulvaney Center as a Program Coordinator. Her work focuses on connecting students with community organizations that work to address border challenges and opportunities. Her hope is to continue a binational life and to continue intentionally collaborating with those that hope to create a more just border region.

María Silva was born and raised in Nogales, Sonora, a few miles south of the U.S./Mexico border. Growing up in the borderlands instilled in her an understanding of the overwhelming cultural, economic and political interdependence of the two neighboring countries. María’s career in community-based work started in an indigenous village in the Copper Canyon of Mexico in 2007, where she facilitated continuing education for adults and oversaw operations and administrative duties at an elementary school. She moved to San Diego

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in 2008 to attend the University of San Diego (USD) and began her work with immigrant communities on both sides of the Tijuana/San Diego border, providing direct services as well as advocacy. She completed her undergraduate studies in 2012. In 2018 María completed a Master's in Migration Studies at the University of San Francisco. Her thesis focused on asylum seekers in the Nogales Sonora/Arizona border. She brings expertise on issues regarding the U.S/Mexico border region to her current role as Director of Neighborhood and Community Engaged Partnerships at the University of San Diego. She facilitates collaboration with community stakeholders along the border region to co-create campus/community engagement through reciprocal partnerships.

Rebecca Maria Goldschmidt is an artist, activist, and educator engaging in place-based art-making and learning. From 2015-2017, she lived in Tijuana and commuted to San Diego to work at The AjA Project and to study Photography at San Diego City College. During this time, she co-founded Borderclick, a transborder student photography archive project, in collaboration with the AjA Project with support from the California Arts Council and California Humanities. She also founded the Tijuana chapter of Las Fotos Project, a photography mentorship program connecting young women to working artists. She received her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2020 and her Bachelor of Arts in German Studies from Lewis & Clark College in 2008. In 2021 she plans to continue her studies as a Research Student at Hiroshima City University in Sculpture as a recipient of the Monbukagakusho MEXT Scholarship from the Japanese Government. Her current projects include LAING Hawai'i, a heritage language preservation school, and Queer Mikveh Project, a ritual art gathering project centering on the experiences of Queer Jews of Color.

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Sara Gonzalez-Quintero is a distinguished major scholar from San Diego State University, where she received a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Spanish with a Minor in Latin American Studies. During her academic trajectory, she participated in culturally enriching academic experiences. Sara completed a semester abroad at the University of Havana, focusing her studies on Caribbean migration and politics. She was also a participant of the Mexican Migration Field Research Project and Training (MMFRP) housed by the University of California, San Diego, where she conducted qualitative research, and she advocated for binational students at Capitol Hill. Meanwhile, she served as Vice President and Public Relations Representative for the Transfronterizo Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at SDSU. Currently, she is the Associate Director of the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) and serves as the Special Projects Coordinator for California Lawyers for the Arts (CLA). She is dedicated to continuing her goal of bringing awareness and equity to social justice issues surrounding migrants in the borderlands.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

The Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity

“You can try to create separation, but we are the living proof that no matter how hard you try to create a boundary, we can still overcome that. And these boundaries are not omnipotent.”
-Luis Chavez Rodriguez

The purpose of this photovoice constructivist grounded theory study is to illustrate the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities. To generate the findings of this study, I conducted 11 photovoice focus groups and 20 one-on-one photovoice interviews in three grounded theory data collection and analysis phases, consisting of 691 images with 32 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity are illustrated in the following model (Figure 2), that is grounded by the thoughts, feelings, and experiences participants shared about their academic trajectories, transborder performances and salient social identities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. This model is illustrated by a Venn diagram consisting of eight overlapping circles representing interrelated themes and subthemes that ground the findings of this study. The findings of this constructivist grounded theory model are informed by two overarching themes: (1) *Transborder Identity* and (2) *Intersections of a Transborder Identity*; that combined exhibit the *Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity*.

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Transborder identity was defined by the psychosocial and cognitive structural developmental processes that Transfronterizx students expressed in relationship to their academic trajectories and transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Transfronterizx students' psychosocial developmental processes were signified by the meanings they ascribed to their transborder identity in relationship to themselves, others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Cognitive structural developmental processes were described by Transfronterizx students' thinking processes and shifts in reasoning about their psychosocial experiences and performances. Transfronterizx students' psychosocial and cognitive structural processes are further portrayed in the following sections through thematic in-vivo codes. Development was described as the skills, knowledge, understandings and performances that Transfronterizx students acquired throughout the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories. Development is an interwoven finding illustrated by the thematic in-vivo codes that defined Transborder Identity.

The *intersections of a transborder identity* are defined by how Transfronterizx students' psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes in relation to their transborder performances and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands influenced their social identities. The intersectionalities of a transborder identity are defined by the following seven interrelated social identity themes: (1) *First-Generation College Student*, (2) *Social Economic Status*, (3) *Mix-Status Families*, (4) *Foster Youth*, (5) *Race & Ethnicity*, (6) *Gender* and (7) *Sexual Orientation*. These themes are further portrayed in the following sections by thematic in-vivo codes. Development was also described by the skills, knowledge, understandings and performances Transfronterizx students acquired throughout the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories while navigating multiple oppressions relating to their social identities at

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the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Development is also an interwoven finding illustrated in the thematic in-vivo codes that defined the intersections of a Transborder Identity. Additionally, along the topics of oppression, I need to announce a trigger warning in page 173, that exhibits a gory reality of violence perpetuated upon the bodies of people at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Please skip to page 175 to avoid this photograph if you find it necessary.

INTERSECTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES OF A TRANSBORDER IDENTITY

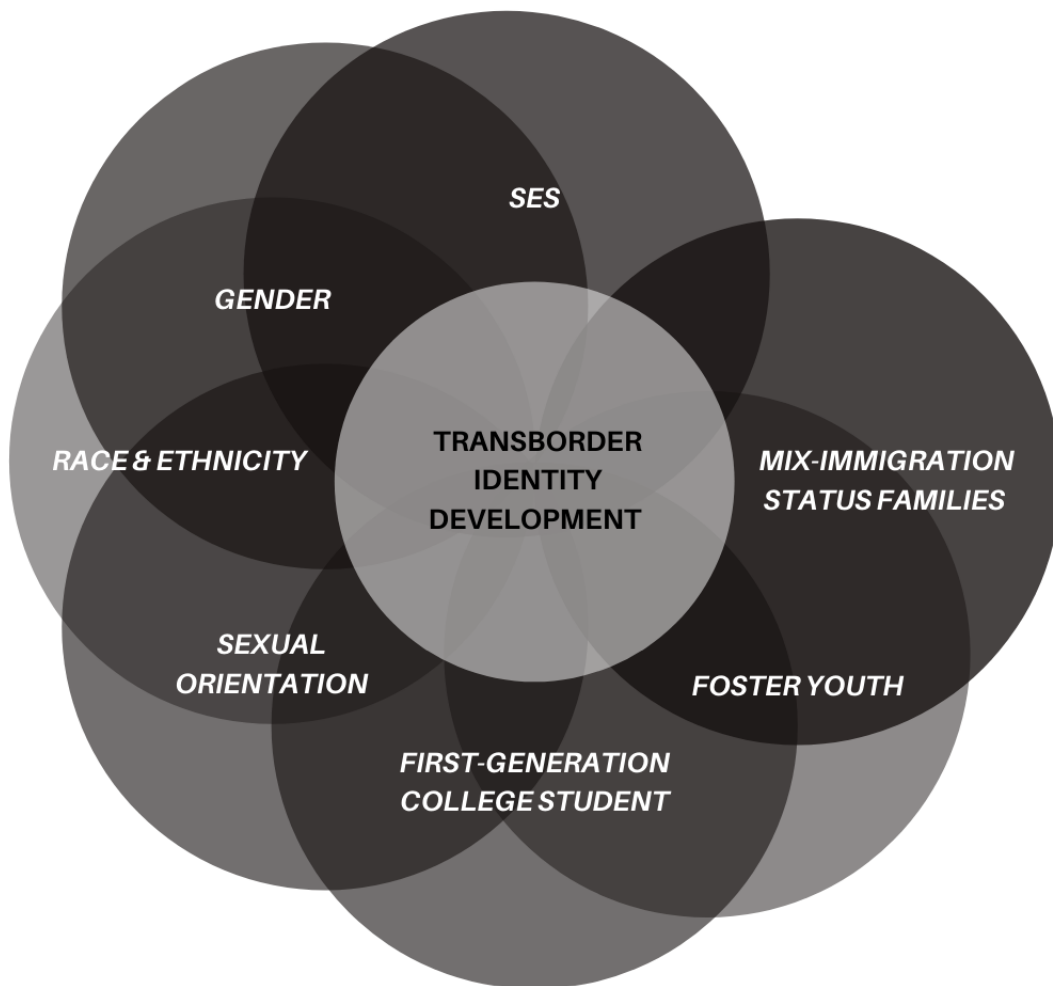


Figure 4. Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity

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Transborder Identity

In this section, *Transborder Identity* is defined by the thoughts, feelings, experiences and performances that Transfronterizx students shared through images and dialogue about their academic trajectories and transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The meanings Transfronterizx students ascribed to their Transborder Identity are represented by their voices in five in-vivo thematic codes. Each in-vivo thematic code defining transborder identity is exhibited by two components: (1) thoughts, ideas and thinking patters (cognitive-structural), and (2) performances, experiences and feelings (psychosocial), in relevance to their transborder lives and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Development is an interwoven finding illustrated by the thematic in-vivo codes in this section, that describe the skills, knowledge, understandings, thinking patters and performances that Transfronterizx students acquired throughout the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Overall, the meanings and experiences that Transfronterizx students ascribed to their transborder identity had a long-lasting impression on how they perceived themselves, others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Luis' reflective thoughts on how he contemplates himself further this notion:

I chose this picture because it looks like just me in the ocean. It's just my essence. Like, who am I? My transborder experience informs the meaning that I create, because I create many experiences. Being transborder is an experience that has left a big mark in my life and it continues to do so. So, I use this experience of being transborder and the lessons that I've learned from it to create meaning of who I am and who I want to be, and it also

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informs my perspective of the world and awareness of specific injustices when it comes to political social justices.



Figure 5. Photovoice one-on-one interview; Photo by Luis Chavez Rodriguez: “My transborder experience informs the meaning that I create.”

Luis provides a lens to understanding the significance that Transfronterizx students’ lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands have on their sense of self, others and sociopolitical environment. The meanings Transfronterizx students ascribed to their Transborder Identity are represented by a sense of belonging, unity, solidarity, adaptability, resilience and resistance at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, through the following five in-vivo thematic codes.

"We Speak Spanish, We Speak English, We Speak Spanglish"

Translanguaging between English, Spanish and Spanglish is a significant cultural practice for Transfronterizx students, and it is evident throughout the languages used to exhibit the

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findings of this study. I am Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, fluent in English, Spanish and Spanglish and understand my community's profound disposition to freely express themselves linguistically through translanguaging. It is noteworthy to mention that I had established rapport with participants as a Transfronterizx community member and organizer, where I've welcomed and utilized translanguaging in meetings and events. Likewise, I began the photovoice focus groups and photovoice interviews of this study by communicating to Transfronterizx students that we could have the interviews in English, Spanish and/or Spanglish. Several participants expressed comfort and relief in having the freedom to communicate in English, Spanish, Spanglish and translanguaging between all three languages during the photovoice focus groups and photovoice interviews for this dissertation. Some Transfronterizx students preferred English, others preferred Spanish and several preferred translanguaging between English, Spanish and Spanglish. As a result, most of the findings are illustrated in translanguaging between English, Spanish and Spanglish. The findings are presented in their original languages, and I provide translations in English for participant quotes in Spanish and Spanglish.

“Lo Que Pasa Es Que Piensas En Los Dos Idiomas.” [Translation: What Happens Is That You Think in Both Languages]. Leonardo explained how and why he communicates most effectively in English, Spanish and Spanglish with his Transfronterizx community and me, as a member of his community. He states:

Creo que lo que pasa es que piensas en los dos idiomas en tu mente y hay ciertas palabras o expresiones que puedes explicar mejor en Inglés y mejor en Español. Para mi, por ejemplo, cuando hablo contigo, cuando hablo con mi hermana, con mi hermano o con amigos que fueron conmigo a la prepa en el otro lado, pero también son de aquí de

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Tijuana; hablamos en Inglés y en Español muy rápido y eso es lo que es Spanglish. En veces también, como estas en Estados Unidos, estás todo el día hablando Inglés. Hay días que hablas Inglés todo el día y luego llegas a Tijuana y ya cambias a Español, pero cuando estás con una persona que es igual que tú [Transfronterizx], te sientes más cómodo diciéndole las cosas en los dos idiomas y te puedes explicar mejor. Creo que así te comunicas mejor, porque los dos idiomas tienen cosas que puedes expresar en tu mente mejor en Inglés y en Español.

[Translation: I think what happens is that you think in both languages in your mind and there are certain words or expressions that you can explain better in English and in Spanish. For me, for example, when I talk to you, when I talk to my sister, my brother or friends who went to high school with me on the other side, but they are also from here in Tijuana, we speak in English and Spanish very fast and that is what Spanglish is. Also, sometimes, since you are in the United States, you are speaking English all day. There are days when you speak English all day and then you arrive to Tijuana and you change to Spanish, but when you are with a person who is the same as you [Transfronterizx], you feel more comfortable saying things in both languages and you can explain yourself better. I think that in this way you communicate better, because both languages have things that you can express in your mind better in English and in Spanish.]

Leonardo's description provides an understanding of how his transborder performances in both nations influenced how he cognitively processed and performed language in San Diego, Tijuana and with his Transfronterizx community. Nanitzia further explained how she cognitively processed translanguaging and performed codeswitching as a Spanish news media intern in San Diego:

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Realmente me han ayudado muchísimo todas estas oportunidades para aprender de la frontera y también aprender más sobre mí y mi capacidad, tanto como escritora y como persona que es capaz de adaptarse y traducir todo el tiempo. Code-switching, porque generalmente en estos dos Media Internships, la información la temenos en Inglés, y era un constante de, “Okay, I’m thinking in English and now I need to write in Spanish, but if I have a question, I have to speak in English.”

[English Translation: All these opportunities have really helped me a lot to learn about the border and also to learn more about myself and my ability, both as a writer and as a person who is capable of adapting and translating all the time. Code-switching, because generally in these two Media Internships, the information was given in English, and it was a constant of, “Okay, I’m thinking in English and now I need to write in Spanish, but if I have a question, I have to speak in English.”]



Figure 6. Photovoice one-on-one interview; photo by Nanitzia. “A person who is capable of adapting and translating all the time.”

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Similar to Leonardo's statement, Nanitzia provides insights into how she cognitively processed Translanguaging to continuously perform codeswitching by simultaneously translating during her duties as a Spanish television media intern in San Diego. Nanitzia also alluded to the concept of adaptability in her development of translanguaging and codeswitching skills.

In the cognitive processes and performance of Translanguaging, development is exhibited by the language skills and confidence Transfronterizx students acquired through time. Nanitzia explained that at the beginning of her transborder living and academics in the community college in the U.S., she felt self-conscious about her language skills in English, and worried that others would see her as an "outsider" because of her ethnicity and accent. She further explained:

I was very aware of my accent, según yo tenía un acento muy marcado, y tenía ese miedo de que, "Si se dan cuenta de que soy Mexicana, I'm going to be an outsider y no voy a saber cómo manejar la situación."

[English Translation: I was very aware of my accent, according to me I had a very strong accent, and I had this fear that, "If they realize that I am Mexican, I'm going to be an outsider and I will not know how to handle the situation."]

Katz faced similar fears and discrimination by English faculty in the community college in relation to her English skills. She shared how at the beginning of her transborder life and studies in the community college, a faculty member in an English course she was enrolled in would pretend that she did not understand her every time she would speak, and how that attitude terribly brought down her self-esteem ["esa actitud me bajó el autoestima terriblemente"]. Katz explained that with her time studying at the community college and her transborder interactions, she acquired the confidence to take pride in her bilingual skills and courage to advocate for herself. She further explained:

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Tener un acento es como, “Wow! Hablo más de un idioma,” y me hace más rica culturalmente... En veces la discriminación viene por racismo, por el miedo que tienen, a lo mejor de vernos volando alto, y quieren apagarnos. Al final de cuentas, nadie necesita apagarnos; cada quien trae su luz propia. En veces es difícil sentirse orgulloso de dónde viene uno; tienes que analizar esa parte de ti, aceptarte y tenerte mucha paciencia.

[English Translation: Having an accent is like, “Wow! I speak more than one language,” and it makes me culturally richer ... Sometimes discrimination stems from racism, from the fear they have. Maybe they see us flying high, and they want to turn us off. In the end of the day, nobody needs to turn us off; each one has its own light. Sometimes it is difficult to be proud of where you come from; you have to analyze that part of you, accept yourself and have a lot of patience with yourself.]

Katz’ struggle with internalized racism. Her subsequent acceptance, to performing and ultimately taking pride in her bilingual skills provide a lens to understanding the growing pains Transfronterizx students face in the process of developing language proficiency in English and Spanish.

Ricardo lived similar experiences. He explained that at the beginning of his Transborder life and academic journey, during high school and the community college, speaking and learning a second language was kind of traumatic. He shared:

Al principio, lo veía como un trauma, como algo muy negativo, pero ahora creo que es algo positivo, creo que es algo que me ha ayudado a madurar, tanto como académicamente y como personalmente.

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[Translation: At first, I saw it as a trauma, as something very negative, but now I think it is something positive, I think it is something that has helped me mature, both academically and personally.]

Ricardo described his initial struggles and journey in developing bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, as he was sharing his accomplishments as a Transfronterizo, bilingual graduate student in Latin American Studies, noting the growing pains of his success.

“I Embrace My Spanish, I Embrace My English Language, My Bilingualism.”

Ricardo further shared how currently, as a graduate student he continues to work on his English proficiency skills:

La maestría ha sido una de las etapas que me ha ayudado bastante a superar mis inseguridades lingüísticas y también a mejorar mi inglés, porque aprendí sobre lo que significa el translanguaging y tengo que utilizar todas estas herramientas lingüísticas que tengo, combinar el español con el inglés. En vez de separar los dos idiomas, combinarlos y así mejorar. En realidad sí te ayuda a mejorar tus dos idiomas, tanto el español como el inglés. Creo que eso ha sido mi viaje sobre mi identidad transfronteriza. Ha sido muy largo. [Translation: The master's degree has been one of the stages that has helped me a lot to overcome my linguistic insecurities and also to improve my English, because I learned about what translanguaging means and I have to use all these linguistic tools that I have, combine Spanish with English. Instead of separating the two languages, combine them and thus improve. It actually does help you improve your two languages, both Spanish and English. I think that has been the journey of my transborder identity. It has been very long.]

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Figure 7. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Ricardo. “Siempre que hay algún tipo de evento como éste y lo hago en Inglés, cuando termino, me siento muy bien...

Haces algo que te hace sentir incómodo pero al final, lo haces y lo haces bien, te ayuda.”

[Translation: Whenever there is some kind of event like this one and I do it in English, when I finish, I feel really good... You do something that makes you feel uncomfortable, but in the end, you do it and you do it well, it helps you.]

Leonardo, Nanitzia, and Ricardo attributed the success of their accomplishments in the U.S. and Mexico to their language proficiency in both English and Spanish. In a similar manner, Dennis possessed English and Spanish bilingual skills that were his driving force to pursue a higher education and study abroad in Chile. Dennis described his feelings:

Cuando estaba en Southwestern College no sabía ni qué degree iba a hacer. Cuando tomé clases en Español, yo me daba cuenta que por medio de nomás mi familia, de mis padres y todo, mi Español era muy bueno. Me gustaba mi idioma. I embrace my Spanish, I embrace my English language, my bilingualism...Sentía que era mi fuerte. Empecé a tomar clases y ahí en esas clases del colegio te hablaban mucho de Latinoamérica, de

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diferentes formas de hablar, de Guatemala, Colombia. Ahí fue donde dije, "¿Qué es lo que puedo hacer? ¿Qué es lo que puedo estudiar?". Terminé obteniendo un associates in social behaviorism, porque tomé muchas clases de todo.

[Translation: When I was at Southwestern College, I didn't even know what degree I was going to study. When I took classes in Spanish, I realized that through just my family, my parents and everything, my Spanish was very good. I liked my language. I embrace my Spanish, I embrace my English language, my bilingualism ... I felt that it was my strength. I started taking classes and there in those school classes they spoke to you a lot about Latin America, about different ways of speaking, about Guatemala, Colombia. That's when I said, "What can I do? What can I study?" I ended up earning an Associates in Social Behaviorism, because I took a lot of classes on everything.]

Language proficiency in English and Spanish played a significant role in Transfronterizx students' sense of belonging in the U.S. and Mexico, and in their abilities to engage in academic, professional and civic leadership in both nations and abroad. Translanguaging and codeswitching was also significant to navigating and adapting to their transborder lives and environments in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

"Soy De Aquí, Y Soy De Allá" [Eng. Translation: *I am From Here, and I am From There*]

Participants illustrated their initial transborder interactions and academic trajectories as Transfronterizx students to depict how they were from both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. Transfronterizx students' initial transborder interactions varied; however, the three most discussed experiences were: (1) being born into a transborder life by forming part of families with established ties in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands; (2) facing displacement in the U.S. due to economic hardships and housing insecurities; and (3) facing family deportation

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and living at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to stay together. All Transfronterizx students who participated in this study are U.S. citizens and crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border daily to continue their studies in the U.S., as students of U.S. citizenship. The beginning of their transborder lives varied in academic trajectory, from K-12, postsecondary and higher education, to undergraduate and graduate studies. All Transfronterizx students who participated in this study had experienced attending postsecondary and higher education in the U.S. In spite of their diversities, their transborder lives had a long-lasting impression on their identities and sense of belonging in the U.S. and Mexico.

Transfronterizx students shared a deep sense of belonging, care, compassion and “love” for their local regions and communities in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. This sense of belonging had a profound influence in how they perceived and interacted in their sociopolitical environments in the San Diego Tijuana borderlands. Developmentally, they expressed two overarching sentiments to illustrate how they perceived their sense of belonging, themselves and others in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico: “*Soy De Aqui, Y Soy De Allá*” [Translation: I am From Here, and I am From There] and “*Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá*” [Translation: I am Not from Here, Nor I am From There]. Several Transfronterizx students shared how they were from both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, and they also expressed that in the beginning of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, they felt like they didn’t belong anywhere. Particularly, younger of age participants, who were also in their initial year as Transfronterizx students, shared feeling like they didn’t belong anywhere. Contrasting, older Transfronterizx students, that had established living a transborder life for several years, shared a sense of belonging to both, San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico. Most Transfronterizx students shared that during the beginning of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, they felt

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like they didn't belong anywhere and echoed the phrase and sentiment: "*Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá*" [translation: I am Not from Here, nor am I from There].

"Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá." The phrase and sentiment by Transfronterizx students, "*Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá*" followed feelings, experiences and thoughts of isolation, loneliness, invisibility, depression and anxiety. Transfronterizx students reflected significantly on feeling like they didn't belong anywhere during phase 1 of data collection and analysis for this study in 2016-2017 at Borderclick, where for some it was their first year living a transborder life. Transfronterizx students identified a feeling of "solitude" as one of the nuances of being transfronterizx. In a photovoice focus group at Borderclick, during an analysis of the light and darkness of their photographs, they explained in synchrony the meaning of solitude, "*Hasta en la luz estás solo, y aun que bayas con gente estás solo*" [Translation: "Even in the light you are alone, and even if you are with people, you are alone"]. In this focus group, participants discussed the solitude, isolation, and invisibility that they felt as they illustrated embarking in their transborder trajectories as Transfronterizx students for the first time. The feelings of solitude and isolation were often described during discussions about their transborder commute. Ulises and Rebecca conceptualized the feeling of solitude while reflecting upon photos Ulises provided to illustrate his transborder commute:

Ulises: *Voy solo, soledad... Por más que quieras ir contento, no puedes. Vas en tu mundo; como yo voy pensando: "Está haciendo frío. ¿Porque me levanto a esta hora? ¿Porque tengo que ir a la escuela?" Entonces yo voy pensando eso, pero siento que nadie más lo hace, solamente yo. Estoy yo encerrado en mi propio mundo, pero tengo que hacerlo.*

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Rebecca: *Es soledad realmente porque hay como muy pocas figuras, nomas cuando ya llegas a la línea que ya hay gente.*

Ulises: *Aun allí nadie te habla, nadie dice nada. Todos están enfocados o están dormidos, no puedes llegar y hablar.*

[Translation:

Ulises: I'm going alone, solitude... As much as you want to go happy, you cannot. You go in your own world; I go thinking: "It's cold. Why do I get up at this time? Why do I have to go to school? " I go thinking that, but I feel that nobody else does it but me. I am closed-up in my own world, but I have to do it.

Rebecca: It's really lonely because there are very few figures, just when you arrive to the line, that is where there are people.

Ulises: Even there nobody talks to you, nobody says anything. Everyone is focused or still asleep, you can't just get there and talk.]



Figure 8. Photovoice focus group at Borderclick, photo by Ulises. [Left photo] “*Estoy Solo; Quería Demostrar Que No Hay Nadie a Esa Hora*” [4:30AM]. [Right photo]

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“Estoy Yo Encerrado En Mi Propio Mundo.” [Translation: [Left photo] “I am alone; I Wanted to Show That There Is No One at That Time” [4:30AM]. [Right photo] “I AM Closed-Up in My Own World.”]

Exemplified in Rebecca’s and Ulises’s analysis, in synchrony, participants stated, “Even if you are with people, you are alone”. In a following photovoice focus group at Borderclick, Aaron further elaborated on the concept of solitude, and he used the terms “Alone Together” to describe the meaning of the isolation that he and other Transfronterizx students felt as a cultural group. Aaron explained what he meant by “Alone Together”:

It captures what I felt so well. The feeling of being surrounded by people and still feeling alone, but there are a lot of us like that: Coming from TJ to the US. We are together in our loneliness, living parallel lives.

Participants also described a feeling of “invisibility” as Transfronterizx students, where they felt like “nobody else” lived a transborder life like they did, yet they understood that “there are a lot” of people like them. Aaron’s statement, “We are together in our loneliness,” captures the lack of inclusion and validation Transfronterizx students felt.

However, feelings of “solitude,” “isolation” and “invisibility” were not only discussed as concepts experienced during the transborder commute. Participants explained experiencing these feelings as Transfronterizx students in many other spaces that they belonged to in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico, such as in school and work environments. In a photovoice focus group at TSAP in 2019, Vanessa reflected back on the initial challenges she faced during her first year as a Transfronteriza student with an image she photographed at Borderclick, and she noted how “loneliness” expanded beyond the transborder commute and into other places, like the community college. Vanessa narrated:

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So, this picture... This is in El Chaparral, which is one of the pedestrian crossings in San Ysidro, there's two. So, I want to say that this is around 7:30-8:30 in the morning. If you haven't been to El Chaparral, this is one of the pedestrian crossings, and you can see how the line is going, so there's this bridge and then it turns into a spiral, so you go into the gate of the CBP building, and then you cross. Even though you are surrounded by a lot of people, as we can clearly see, I'm kind of feeling lonely at the beginning. It's not only the commute, but also like the emotional challenge that comes with crossing a border, a militarized border. I started college in 2016... I was super scared coming here, nevertheless, I knew that this is where I wanted to come. There are also challenges that you have to face, and one of them was loneliness; I didn't know anybody. I had one friend who also crossed constantly and that was it... I would go to classes and people here in the United States are really like in their world, so I didn't really make friends. It's really hard to make friends here, so, again, that feeling of loneliness...



Figure 9. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photographed by Vanessa at Borderclick.

“Even though you are surrounded by a lot of people, as we can clearly see, I’m kind of feeling lonely.”

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The feeling of “invisibility” was also echoed by many Transfronterizx students during several photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews of this dissertation, referencing this sentiment throughout their academic trajectories from K-12, and postsecondary and higher education. As Transfronterizx students reflected back to their academic trajectories, they explained how during their time as Transfronterizx students, support from family and peers ameliorated their feeling of “isolation” and helped them build a sense of belonging in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico. In regard to establishing a sense of belonging on campus in postsecondary and higher education, several students referenced BorderClick, TSAP and TASO, and explained how these programs and organizations helped ameliorate feeling “invisible.” During a photovoice focus group in TSAP, Vanessa and Jhovanna further explained:

Vanessa: For me, that feeling of loneliness was at the beginning, and then, as I met Vanessa, I started going to BorderClick and made friends here, that feeling started to disappear, but that transition took a long time for me...I learned about Border Click, the program for which this photo was taken, and I just found this amazing group of transborder people whom I identify with, and I was like “Oh, look, I’m not the only one.”

Jhovanna: Qué más puedo decir? Creo que me siento más cómoda porque tengo a Vanne y Karina, tengo a muchas personas que me han ayudado en estos momentos, ya no me siento tan, tan sola, y sé que puedo contar con ellas...

[Translation: What else can I say? I think I feel more comfortable because I have Vanne and Karina, I have many people who have helped me at this time, I no longer feel so, so alone, and I know I can count on them ...

It is noteworthy to highlight that TASO, TSAP and BorderClick are grassroots, student-led programs dedicated to creating inclusive and validating environments for Transfronterizx

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students in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Contrasting the feelings of “loneliness,” “isolation” and “invisibility,” several Transfronterizx students shared experiencing a sense of inclusion for the first time, cultural validation and community as Transfronterizx students in these grassroots organization. Moreover, in regard to “visibility,” several participants requested to use their name instead of a pseudonym for this dissertation, expressing the opportunity to take pride in their transborder identity. Further illustrated in the theme of this dissertation, “We have to Adapt to Live in These Situations,” adapting to challenges they faced as Transfronterizx students in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands also played a significant role in their sense of belonging to San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico. Among the intersectionalities transfronterizx students faced in relationship to their transborder identity and social identities, microaggressions, discrimination and racism also perpetuated their feelings and thoughts of not belonging anywhere.

“Soy De Aqui, Y Soy De Allá.” [Translation: I am From Here, and I am From There]. This was a phrase and sentiment shared by Transfronterizx students that followed discussions about positive feelings, experiences and thoughts relating to family, friends, community and professional, academic and civic leadership in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico. “*Soy De Aqui, Y Soy De Allá*” was a phrase that Transfronterizx students shared to express their deep ties, connections and sense of belonging to San Diego, Tijuana, the greater U.S. and Mexico. Nanitzia, Perla, and Isaac used concepts like “in-betweeness,” “hybridity” and “adaptability” to describe their cognitive processing of how they viewed themselves and others in their transition from feeling like they didn’t belong anywhere to establishing a sense of belonging to both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico.

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It's just liked the way you adapt in certain environments. Al principio, me sentía en nada, o sea yo conté las primeras semanas, no me sentía ni de Tijuana ni de San Diego, era como que, "Where am I? What I'm a doing? O sea, ¿Quién soy?" Pero ya conforme pasaba el tiempo y lo experimentaba un poquito más, era más como, "Okay, I'm going to embrace both sides, over the border and the border itself, cause it's border region, right?"

The dynamic between the border, the dynamic between the two cities and two countries.

You can look at it as one specifically, en sí, cada lado tiene lo suyo, pero también cada lado se relaciona entonces, it was more like, "I'm going to embrace both sides of the border, both in my identity and as well as what I want to do in the future career wise".

[Translation: It's just like, the way you adapt in certain environments. At first, I felt like nothing, that is, I counted the first weeks, I felt neither from Tijuana nor from San Diego, it was like, "Where am I? What am I doing? I mean, who am I? But as time went by and I experienced it a little more, it was more like, "Okay I'm going to embrace both sides, over the border and the border itself, cause it's border region, right?" The dynamic between the border, the dynamic between the two cities and two countries. You can look at it as one specifically, in itself, each side has its own thing, but also each side is related, so it was more like, "I'm going to embrace both sides of the border, both in my identity and as well as what I want to do in the future career wise. "

Nanitzia's narrative of her internal dialogue on transitioning towards establishing a sense of belongingness to both nations, societies and cities in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, provide a lens to understanding Transfronterizx students' cognitive processes to ameliorating the uncomfortable feelings associated with thinking that they do not belong anywhere. Similar to Nanitzia's feelings, "embrac[ing] both sides of the border" was also

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integral to Perla's positive sense of identity "acceptance" and belonging to both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. Perla points out her sentiment:

Más que nada es la aceptación. Por ejemplo, en la educación, como yo estoy estudiando para ser maestra, que es Liberal Studies, es la mejor ahí en San Diego State. Entonces, muchas veces, lo que a nosotros nos enseñan es que tenemos que aceptar esta diversidad en las culturas. Estamos aprendiendo de que-- Creo nos están enseñando a ser un área de educación-- Déjame ver cómo lo puedo decir. Make sure we embrace everybody's culture...I think it's a sense of just accepting everyone. I think at some point I accepted myself and I decided that I can be both, rather than having to choose one. I think it's just acceptance of my own, of who I am and what I can be...Creo que me adapté a la idea de, "Soy de aquí y soy de allá", porque de cierta manera encajo en los dos mundos, aunque para los demás no. Yo sé que a lo que yo vivo y lo que soy capaz de hacer en ambos lados, puedo ser parte de las dos comunidades.

[Translation: More than anything, it is acceptance. For example, in education, since I am studying to be a teacher, which is Liberal Studies, it is the best there is in San Diego State. So, many times, what they teach us is that we have to accept this diversity in cultures. We're learning. I think they're teaching us to be an area of education. Let me see how I can put it. Make sure we embrace everybody's culture... I think it's a sense of just accepting everyone. I think, at some point, I accepted myself, and I decided that I can be both, rather than having to choose one. I think it's just acceptance of my own, of who I am and what I can be... I think I adapted to the idea of, "I'm from here and I'm from there," because in a certain way I fit in both worlds, although, to others I do not. I know

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that because of what I live and what I am capable of doing on both sides, I can be part of both communities.]

Isaac provides further insights to the understanding of what it means to “embrace both sides of the border”, with more specifically noting how his identity is a hybridity of his “Mexican” and “American” cultures. Isaac synthesizes this concept further:

This is to illustrate one part of my identity, of being a chemist, and also the hybrid personality that I have, which also comes from the transborder personality. I don't feel like I am transborder; I feel like I'm a hybrid person, where I have both the Mexican culture and the American culture. I define it more as a hybrid person rather than transborder, o ni de aquí, ni de allá. I feel like I'm more of a hybrid of both things. Right here [pointing at a picture], this is to exemplify that same thing. This is a hybrid, because I'm working in a chemistry lab, because I'm a chemist; but then, in another picture, I'm working in a biology lab. That would be a biologist's work; but since I'm a biochemist, I'm able to work in the two environments, in the two labs; one which is most chemical-guided or used, and the other one, where it's more of cells. With these two pictures, I'm showing you my personalities, what makes me, what interested me. I'm really interested in science; I feel that I want to have an overall background in science. I chose the career of biochemistry because it encompasses chemistry, and it also encompasses biology. It's the chemistry of the biology. I felt that was a great degree, because it would expose me to those two environments, which was something that I was already used to, being exposed to two environments; being exposed to the culture of Mexico and being exposed to the culture here in the United States. It was something that I already was used to. It just reflects on my career choice.

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Figure 10. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Isaac. [Left photo] “This is a hybrid, because I’m working in a chemistry lab, because I’m a chemist; but then, in another [right photo] picture, I’m working in a biology lab.”

Isaac synthesized several processes to understanding how Transfronterizx students make meaning of their transborder identity and sense of belonging to San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico, at the same time. Firstly, Isaac provides an important insight to addressing the concept of a *Transborder Identity* in this section, and that is that not all Transfronterizx students identify as “Transborder” or “Transfronterizx.” Secondly, the “hybridity” of his “Mexican” and “American” cultural identities is informed by his profound knowledge and understanding of the “environments” in both, Mexico and the U.S. During our photovoice one-on-one interview, Isaac further discussed that he has been a Transfronterizx student for most of his life, beginning in elementary school; and how, with time, he has acquired knowledge, skills, practices and strategies to effectively and efficiently navigate the San Diego-Tijuana region and “border

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environment.” Isaac’s insights are further illustrated in the following section, “We Have to Adapt to Live in These Situations.”

Overall, Isaac, Perla and Nanitzia provide optics to understanding their cognitive processes to developing and transitioning from feeling like they don’t belong anywhere to establishing a positive sense of identity and belonging in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. Alonzo, Sara and Josemar provide a definition to what “*Soy de Aquí, y Soy de Allá*” means to them through concepts of “Love,” “Connection” and “Social Justice” for the region, their families and communities in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. Alonzo defines his love for the region:

Esta otra foto la saque Tambien. Basicamente, lo que todo mundo dice, “I love Tijuana” y básicamente la ciudad en grande. Ya ves que tomas fotos cada vez que vas a ciertos lugares. Para mi este símbolo, este sticker, lo tengo en mi laptop y lo cargo siempre en mi computadora; representa, básicamente, el amor que le tengo a la ciudad de Tijuana y como lo llevo a todas partes conmigo, es parte de mi, y me pone orgulloso ser parte de Tijuana.

[Translation: I also took this other photo. Basically, from what everyone says, "I love Tijuana" and basically the city at large. You see that you take pictures every time you go to certain places. For me, this symbol, this sticker, I have it on my laptop, I always have it on my computer; basically, it represents the love I have for the city of Tijuana; and as I take it everywhere with me, it is part of me, and it makes me proud to be part of Tijuana.]



Figure 11. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Alonzo. "I love Tijuana."

Sara describes her long-lasting ties and connections to “both sides” of the border:

I feel like this is very visual in terms of my lifestyle... In terms of family, culture, connections, I feel connected to both sides. We can say that started there, but it hasn't really ended. It just ended in terms of me moving to the States when I was accepted to San Diego State. I moved here only because I saw that it was very difficult for me to be able to work (I didn't have a car at the time), to use public transportation, to study and to carry on with my family duties.



Figure 12. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Sara Gonzalez-Quintero. “I feel connected to both sides”

Both Sara and Alonzo shared positive feelings, thoughts and experiences to what “*Soy de Aquí, y Soy de Allá*” means to them. Yet, to wholistically understand what it means for Transfronterizx students to live, study and establish a sense of belong to both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, is important to address the geopolitical and societal challenges that they face in both nations, societies and cities. Perla concisely explains, “*Gozamos de las virtudes de ambos países,*

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pero también vivimos los desafíos de ambos países.” [Translation: We enjoy the virtues of both countries, but we also live the challenges of both countries]. Josemar further narrates on this reality:

Just the tragedies that I've been through, you know, losing friends to violence, losing family to violence; all those things made me want to do something. I started really thinking about why these things were happening. I understand it's because of violence, but where does that come from? What is causing violence? ...Why did this person decide to take a life? Why are people disappearing? "*Oh bueno* [Translation: Oh OK], the drug war." "It's drugs. Okay, cool." "Why do people take drugs?" "Why is there a market?" "Why is violence happening?" "*Porque específicamente en esta region* [Translation: Why is it specifically in this region], and then it starts getting globally?" It's a bigger systematic problem. It's not just about a *pinche city, güey!* [Translation: fucking city, dude!] It's not just about drugs, güey! [Translation: dude!]...That's kind of what inspired me, trying to understand this violence and trying to stop it. I know I can't stop it! I know it's larger than one person. *Pero* [but] I wanted to intervene in these phases, at least in education; because, when I was going to school, nobody talked about being transborder, *ni de pedo güey!* [not even as a joke, dude!] Even though it's such a huge community, nobody spoke about it. I felt that I wanted youth who were going through similar things not to go through the same things.

Like Josemar, during the photovoice one-on-one interviews, Transfronterizx students shared experiences about several geopolitical and societal challenges they faced in San Diego, CA, Tijuana, Baja California, and in the U.S.-Mexico border system. These challenges are depicted throughout all of the intersectionalities transfronterizx students discussed in relationship to their

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transborder identity and social identities. Josemar further discussed how he worked towards the achievement of social justice for Transfronterizx youth in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, by co-founding the BorderClick program, a safe space of cultural validation for Transfronterizx students. Overall, Transfronterizx students' thoughts and feelings of "love," "connection," sense of belonging and profound understanding of the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were demonstrated by performances of "social justice" in both San Diego, CA, Tijuana, Baja California, and the border system. These performances are illustrated in the following in-vivo theme: "Building Bridges, Not Walls".

"Building Bridges, Not Walls"

"Building Bridges, Not Walls" was an ideology and performance of social justice echoed and illustrated through photographs discussed by most Transfronterizx students. The photographs Transfronterizx students shared were of great photovoice significance to themselves in illustrating the social, racial and geopolitical injustices of their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Some of the images they shared for this dissertation study were also images that they had presented and exhibited in spaces of art and social media to bring light to the injustices perpetuated upon vulnerable communities in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. For this reason, several participants requested to have their names associated with their images. Transfronterizx students illustrated their performances of social justice in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands through activism in San Diego, CA, Tijuana, Baja California, and the border system.

"Borders Are Not Natural." Transfronterizx students began to conceptualize what "Building Bridges, Not Walls" meant to them, by depicting how "borders are not natural" through photographs that exhibited the contrast between "nature" and the "border wall." Ivette, Perla and Dennis illustrated this contrast through the following images:



Figure 13. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Ivette Lorona. “I think this picture visualizes what Transfronterizxs, undocumented migrants, and asylum seekers see: it's barbed wire.”

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Figure 14. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Perla. "We share one sky. This sky is not asking anyone for permission to be on the other side."



Figure 15. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Dennis J. Arreola. "A human-constructed barrier. It just reminds you of like, "What is that doing there? It's not natural!"

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Ivette's reference to the barbed wire in *figure 13* is in regard to the barbed wire refugees arriving in Tijuana see when seeking asylum at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry; the barbed wire that undocumented immigrants see when detained in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) concentration camps; and the barbed wire Transfronterizx people see when crossing the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. Ivette further described *figure 13*:

I think this is a vivid picture of what the border really is. It's not a barrier, it's not something that just divides. In the back, you can see the light, and that's border patrol making sure that you don't cross to their territory.

Ivette further discussed how beyond a “barrier,” the border and border enforcing systems dehumanize, imprison and take the lives of vulnerable migrant populations. Perla also explained significant insights in reference to her photograph in *figure 14* by elaborating on how “borders are not natural” as she shared, "It's the human ideas that just put this concept of a border where in reality and in nature it doesn't even exist." In *figure 15*, Dennis also discusses how borders are a “human-constructed barrier,” and depicts how nature does not allow the man-made border to encroach inland any further in both his photographs, left and right:

[left photo] *Por más que quieran no pueden hacer la fence más y más adentro, porque la naturaleza no lo permite, porque nos recuerda que it's all human-constructed, that it's not natural...* [right photo] *Lo mismo que la playa, en otra forma te lo está demostrando, el mismo cielo, la misma tierra,* and you put in a human-constructed barrier. It just reminds you like, "What is that doing there? It's not natural!"

[Translation: [left photo] As much as they want, they cannot make the fence deeper and deeper, because nature does not allow it, because it reminds us that it's all human-constructed, that it's not natural ... [right photo] The same as the beach, in another way, it

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is showing you the same sky, the same earth, and you put in a human-constructed barrier.

It just reminds you of like, "What is that doing there? It's not natural!"]

Borders as a “man-made” construct are further described through Transfronterizx students’ insights and images about the intersections of their transborder identity in the in-vivo theme of this dissertation, “Borders are Man-Made, Just like Racism.”

Ivette, Perla and Dennis also shed light on the intensified scrutiny, hostility and racism perpetuated at the U.S.-Mexico International Ports of Entry and the U.S.-Mexico border wall during the Trump presidential administration. Specifically, Ivette’s and Dennis’ photographs of the barbed wire were in reference to the intensified hostility and militarization at the U.S.-Mexico border region and along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands during the Trump era. Dennis also noted the racism perpetuated by that administration towards Mexican people and Mexican-Americans in the U.S. He described how both his existence as Transfronterizo Mexican-American and his photographs demonstrated a form of activism against that racism. Dennis further exhibited and discussed:

Es como una forma de activismo. Lo miro yo porque es como, "Mira, estoy de este lado de la frontera, pero también puedo estar del otro", porque es la misma gente, es nuestra gente. Nosotros somos Mexicanos. There's a hyphen in Mexican-Americans, it's the same. Somos Mexicanos at the end of the day. It's like, "Which Mexicans you don't want over here? Because I'm on the other side of the border, I'm on this side of the border. I can take a picture and I can showcase what you do, you put barbed wires, pones eso, y at the end of the day, I can be on the other side. I live on the other side."

[Translation: It's like a form of activism. I look at it because it's like, "Look, I'm on this side of the border, but I can also be on the other side," because it's the same people, it's

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our people. We are Mexicans. There's a hyphen in Mexican-Americans, it's the same. We are Mexicanos at the end of the day. It's like, "Which Mexicans you don't want over here? Because I'm on the other side of the border, I'm on this side of the border. I can take a picture and I can showcase what you do, you put barbed wires, you put that, and at the end of the day, I can be on the other side. I live on the other side.”]



Figure 16. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Dennis J. Arreola. “*Es como una forma de activism...*” [Translation: It's like a form of activism...]

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Dennis reference to “you” during our photovoice one-on-one interview was directed to Trump. Similar to Dennis, several participants of this study saw their existence as Transfronterizxs as a form of resistance to the division and dehumanization the U.S.-Mexico border wall and the border enforcing systems perpetuate upon their families and vulnerable migrant communities in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Specifically, their resistance to the U.S.-Mexico border system was demonstrated through their shared ideologies to “serve as a bridge” between both nations by performances of civic leadership and activism in Tijuana, Baja California; San Diego, CA, and at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“I’m an Activist in Tijuana and San Diego.” Serving as a bridge between both nations through civic leadership and activism in Tijuana, Baja California; San Diego, CA, and at the U.S.-Mexico international border was a performance profoundly tied to Transfronterizx students’ meaning making of their transborder identity. Examples of Transfronterizx students’ activism and civic leadership at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were prevalent in most photovoice focus groups and one-on-one interviews of this dissertation study. Their civic leadership and activism were in support and solidarity with vulnerable communities in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, that are subject to social oppression, dehumanization and brutality by governments, immigration enforcement and police in both nations. The exemplar quotes and images that illustrate Transfronterizx students’ civic leadership and activism are extensive. For the purpose of this section, I will showcase how Alejandro, Josemar, Sara and Nanitzia engaged in activism in Tijuana, Baja California; San Diego, CA, and at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. I will also illustrate the meanings they ascribed to their performances of social justice.

Like Dennis’ sentiment, Alejandro also shared how his photographs of solidarity efforts in the region are a form of activism. Specifically, the images that he provided for this dissertation

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study during a photovoice focus group at TSAP in 2019 were part of his participatory photography exhibition titled “In Solidarity,” dedicated to amplifying the requests and realities of refugees in Tijuana, Baja California, seeking asylum at the San Diego International Port of Entry. These are a few of the photographs Alejandro shared and discussed:

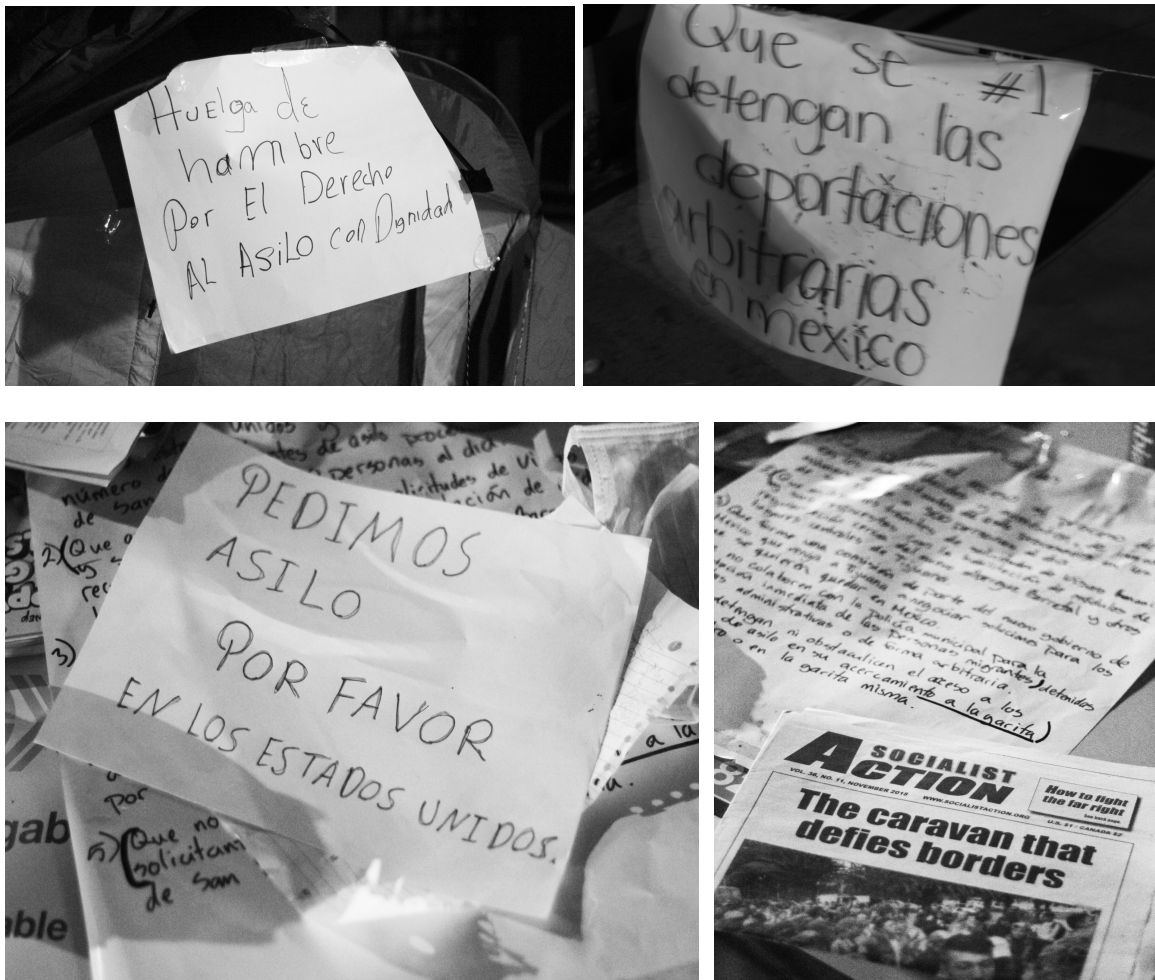


Figure 17. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photograph by Alejandro Martínez’s exhibition titled: “In Solidarity.” Requests from refugees in Tijuana, Baja California, seeking asylum at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry [Translation: Hunger Strike for the Right to Seek Asylum with Dignity. Stop Arbitrary Deportations in Mexico. We Are Asking for Asylum, Please, In the United States. Do not stop or hinder access to the right of asylum when approaching the port of entry, or at the port of entry itself.]



Figure 18. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photograph by Alejandro Martinez’s exhibition titled: “In Solidarity.” “Are you familiar with the teargas incident that happened on the 25th of November? You know that picture of the woman with her daughters...this was her stuff...this was the tear gas from that attack.”



Figure 19. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photograph by Alejandro Martinez’ exhibition titled: “In Solidarity.” “This is not a place where a child should be living.”

Alejandro discussed how his participatory photography exhibition titled, “In Solidarity” was a result of this civic leadership in Tijuana, Baja California, in support of refugees from around the world, predominantly from Mexico, Central American, South American and Haiti, seeking asylum at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Alejandro’s civic leadership ranged from arranging and transporting donation drives from San Diego, CA, in support of refugees in Tijuana, Baja California, to standing in solidarity with refugees during their peaceful protests for asylum and human rights at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Alejandro further discussed how he stood in solidarity with refugees during their peaceful protest:

Something that I feel that I could do as a photographer was at least document. And also, they had no security. So, a lot of things that I would do is I would go there at 11 o'clock at night and stay there for two to three hours or for as long as I could, because I would

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have to wake up very early the next day and just be there literally in solidarity. There should be a physical presence because a lot of times that I was with them during the day, a lot of people from Tijuana would go in their cars and yell at them things like, you know, "What are you doing here?" "Go back to where you came from!" "We don't want you here!" So even just being able to be there with them and kind of hear those insults with them and be in solidarity with them meant a lot to them.

Part of Alejandro's civic leadership in solidarity with refugees was to amplify their requests for asylum and human rights during their peaceful protests at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. As a result, Alejandro's participatory photography exhibition, "In Solidary" was centered on serving as a platform to voice their requests [Figure 17].

Alejandro also utilized "In Solidary" to exhibit the dehumanization and brutality perpetuated against refugees by border enforcing governments in the U.S. and Mexico. Specifically, in *figure 18*, he demonstrated the belongings of a refugee mother and her children who were victims of a massive tear gas attack on November 25th, 2018, by the U.S. Border Patrol system that fired hundreds of rounds of tear gas into Mexico during a peaceful protest by refugees and human rights organizers at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Alejandro further narrated about his photograph:

Are you familiar with the teargas incident that happened on the 25th of November? You know that picture of the woman with her daughters, that very famous photograph? I didn't know it, but this was her stuff. I was actually with my partner at the time, we were walking around Benito Juarez just another day, where I'm asking people what they needed and trying to figure out the situation... This was right after the tear gas attack happened... I remember that right before I got to her tent, I remember talking to the little

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girl and she showed me her back... She was hit by a bunch of pellets. Then she showed me the teargas and I took a photograph of it... This was the tear gas from that attack. And this is what I would consider the photograph that I have of that woman, that is really symbolic of that terrible event.

Benito Juarez was the refugee camp in Tijuana, Baja California, where Alejandro volunteered and established rapport and lasting friendships with asylum seekers. Alejandro shared how the ground volunteer work at Benito Juarez was a significant component to his “In Solidarity” social justice work and participatory photography with refugees in Tijuana, Baja California. Another social justice component to Alejandro’s “In Solidarity” participatory photography exhibition was bringing to light the inhuman conditions that refugees were living at Benito Juarez while seeking and waiting for asylum at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Alejandro’s “In Solidarity” exhibition captured severely dire living conditions that refugees were faced with at Benito Juarez. The most heartbreaking photographs were those of children at the camp. Alejandro stated in reference to his photographs in *figure 19*, “We can just see here that this is not a place where a child should be living. This is not a place where any children at all should be existing.”

As in Alejandro’s example, the refugee global crisis was of great concern for most Transfronterizx students in their fight for social justice at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students’ social justice efforts at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands also involved civic leadership towards the equity, visibility and inclusion of their Transfronterizx community. Hand-in-hand with Transfronterizx students’ social justice efforts for their community, was their civic leadership in solidarity with migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and detainees at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Alejandro explained:

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If we are fighting for the Transborder community, we need to be fighting for refugees as well. If we are fighting for communities who are being impacted by the border, we need to be fighting for all the communities that are being affected by the border.

Transfronterizx students' civic leadership for the social justice of their community and vulnerable communities in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands was illustrated throughout most of the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews of this dissertation.

Noteworthy are the grassroots and nonprofit programs and organizations mentioned, that provided spaces of civic leaderships for Transfronterizx students. BorderClick, TASO and TSAP were not only discussed as spaces of visibility and inclusion for the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation; the organizations were also discussed as spaces where participants developed leadership skills and engaged in the empowerment of their community.

Additionally, the following are organizations at the forefront of the fight for the human rights of migrants, refugees, detainees and asylum seekers at the California-Baja California Borderlands:

Centro Cultural La Raza (San Diego, CA)

Detainee Allies (San Diego, CA)

Enclave Caracol (Tijuana, Baja California)

Pedacito de Cielo (Tijuana, Baja California)

Border Angels (San Diego, CA)

Aguilas del Desierto (Fallbrook, CA)

Otay Detention Center Resistance (San Diego, CA)

Al Otro Lado (Tijuana, Baja California)

These organizations were mentioned by Transfronterizx students as spaces where they could apply their values of “building bridges” between both nations by volunteering in solidarity

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efforts in support of vulnerable communities affected by the border and border enforcing systems in the U.S. and Mexico.

Prevalent national and local social and racial justice issues in San Diego, CA, Tijuana, Baja California, the greater United States and Mexico were also of great concern for Transfronterizx students. As a result, Transfronterizx students engaged in social movements critical to communities affected by social and racial injustices in both the U.S. and Mexico. The following are Josemar's, Sara's and Nanitizia's photographs from the 2017 Mexican protest against the hike on gasoline prices and the Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S. in the summer of 2020:

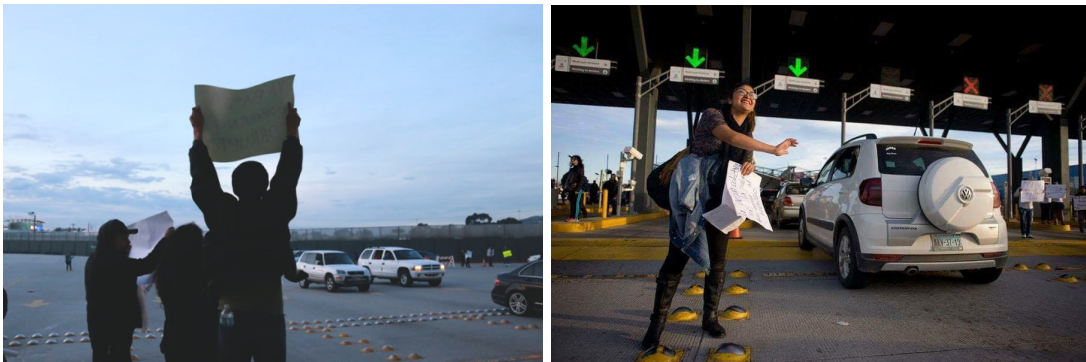


Figure 20. Photovoice one-on-one interview; photo to the left by Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga and photo to the right by Sara Gonzalez-Quintero. 2017 Mexican Protest Against the Hike in Gasoline Prices, at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry.

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Figure 21. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Nanitzia. Summer 2020, Black Lives Matter Protest in San Diego, CA.

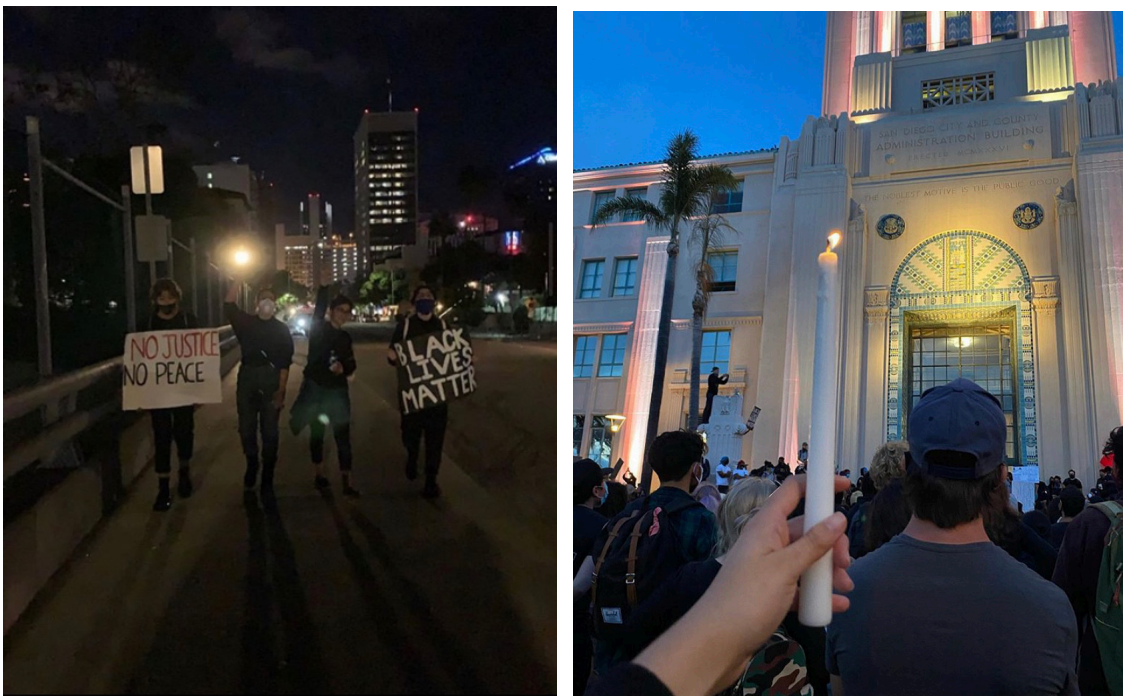


Figure 22. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Sara Gonzalez-Quintero. Summer 2020, Black Lives Matter Protest and Vigil in San Diego, CA.

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The 2017 Mexican Protest against the hike in gasoline prices was a series of protests throughout the nation in resistance of the privatization of the Mexican oil industry, that proceeded with a 20% increase in the price of gasoline. The sudden hike in gas prices affected the entire nation, including Tijuana, Baja California, and severely impacted the most vulnerable communities already living in poverty. As a result, the people of Mexico protested and shutdown government facilities and state-owned gas stations. In Tijuana, the people shutdown Mexican customs, and opened the San Ysidro-Tijuana international border to Mexico. Describing his photograph in *figure 20*, Josemar recalls that day at the border:

There is this border community that is down to go protest, that is down to go march, that they're down to open up the border in the Mexico side if necessary, you know, people can be angry. People are angry.

Sara was also at the same protest as Josemar, at the San Ysidro-Tijuana international border. As she described her photograph in *figure 20*, she recalled how important it is for her to engage in social justice issues in both Mexico and the U.S. Particularly, this protest was Sara's first time participating in activism in Mexico. She further recalled:

That was the first time that I participated in a Mexico issue. Usually, the marches that I had participated in were very-- *Eran muy pacificas, eran en* [Translation: They were very peaceful, they were in] San Diego. Being here, it was a different scenario, because we were trying to close down the port of entry to make a bigger statement of why there was an increase in the sale of gas, not in the use, in the sale of gas. That was the first time that I got directly involved in activism in Mexico.

Both Sara and Josemar were significantly involved in the activism of social justice issues in both the U.S. and Mexico. Josemar explained what activism in solidarity with communities affected

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by social injustices meant to him: “If you're liberated, if you're free, you should free somebody else.” Sara further explained why she was involved in activism and social justice movements in both nations:

It has to do with a binational issue...no solo estar involucrada en las cuestiones Americanas, pero también involucrarme en las cuestiones Mexicanas que me afectan.

[Translation: It has to do with a binational issue... not only being involved in American issues, but also getting involved in Mexican issues that affect me.]

A prevalent racial injustice social issue in the United States is the racism and police brutality and murder of innocent Black people. A most recent movement against the racism, brutality and murder of Black people by police is Black Lives Matter. In the summer of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, police murdered Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and George Floyd. As a result, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of the United States, joined the Black Lives Matter Movement and took to the streets in protest. As Nanitzia was illustrating her photographs in *figure 21*, she reflected on why it was important for her to join the Black Lives Matter Movement specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Creo que esta combinación, esta intersección de una pandemia y justicia social y toda esta tensión que existe en el ambiente. Realmente es un momento muy único y como personas jóvenes creo que el hecho de decir, "Okay, si hay pandemia, y nosotros estamos cuidándonos, usando guantes, usando mascarillas y todo eso. Okay, lo estamos haciendo, pero también vamos a salir a las calles a protestar. Porque, ¿cómo es posible que aún en plena pandemia siga pasando esto?" Creo que si fue un momento muy único tanto en San Diego como en el resto del país. De, okay, es momento de alzar la voz, como personas jóvenes al menos.

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[Translation: I think this combination, this intersection of a pandemic and social justice and all this tension that exists in the environment. It really is a very unique moment, and as young people, I think that the fact of saying, "Okay, there is a pandemic, and we are taking care of ourselves, wearing gloves, wearing masks and all that. Okay, we are doing that, but we are also going to go out on the streets to protest. Because how is it possible that even in the midst of a pandemic this (extreme racism) is still happening?" I think it was a very unique moment, both in San Diego and in the rest of the country. Of, okay, it's time to raise your voice, as young people at least.]

Sara also shared photographs [Figure 22] from the Black Lives Matter protests, marches and vigils that she participated in during the summer of 2020. Additionally, she shared her fears of participating in public events during the COVID-19 pandemic, after the death of a loved one due to COVID. She considered alternative ways and continued to advocate for racial justice through social media.

As mentioned in the “Soy de Aquí, y Soy De Allá” [translation: I am from Here, and I am From There] in-vivo theme of this dissertation, Transfronterizx students are affected by social justice issues prevalent in both nations. As Sara noted, how she is not only “involved in American issues, but also getting involved in Mexican issues that affect” her, several other Transfronterizx students shared how social justice issues in both nations directly affected them and their families. Like Sara, their activism in San Diego; Tijuana and the border were in response to their awareness and critical consciousness about these issues. In addition to activism, several Transfronterizx students were also significantly involved in civic leadership, academic development and professional responsibilities pertaining to social justice issues in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California.

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"We Have to Adapt to Live in These Situations"

“We have to adapt to live in these situations,” is a thematic in-vivo code that illustrates how Transfronterizx students developed skills, knowledge, thinking patterns and performances, during their transborder interactions and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students described the skills, knowledge, thinking patterns and performances that they developed during their transborder interactions and academic trajectories as necessary in adapting to challenges they faced in their San Diego-Tijuana transborder environment. Transfronterizx students’ transborder environment is described as San Diego, CA; Tijuana, Baja California, the greater U.S., Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico international border. Overall, their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and the U.S.-Mexico international border was described as a harsh place to “grow” in. Rebecca further explained this idea as she described her photograph [figure 23] in a photovoice focus group at BorderClick:

Pensando en la flor, una planta, como un símbolo de resistencia; un símbolo de adaptabilidad; un símbolo de crecimiento, un poco también; pero también dentro de un mundo humano, como pensando en la planta en el mundo humano, o el mundo humano en el mundo de la planta [Translation: Thinking of the flower, a plant, as a symbol of resistance; a symbol of adaptability; a symbol of growth; but also within a human world, as thinking of the plant in the human world, or the human world in the plant world]...we are talking about a process that we go back and forth, and back and forth, and cross and cross. And thinking about nature and seasons and plants as doing the same kind of thing we do. Maybe they don’t move like we do, but they grow, and they die, and they come back. A lot of these plants have adapted to live in these situations, like very low water situations...



Figure 23. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Rebecca Maria

Goldschmidt. “Maybe they don’t move like we do, but they grow, and they die, and they come back. A lot of these plants have adapted to live in these situations...”

Like Rebecca, participants described adaptability as a necessary trait to developing and growing as Transfronterizx students in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students describe adaptability in two forms: first, the importance of understanding the transborder environment in order to successfully develop their skills for adapting; and second, they described a series of performances that they applied in adapting to the challenges they faced in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands in their pursuit of success as Transfronterizx students. Their understanding [cognitive-structural] and performance [psychosocial] processes of adapting to their transborder environment were also important to their sense of self and meaning making of their transborder identity.

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“I Get to the Border and it's Like a Known Habitat.” As exhibited in the previous in-vivo themes of this dissertation, Transfronterizx students illustrated various thorough and complex understandings of the social, political and cultural contexts in both the U.S. and Mexico. Transfronterizx students also explained the importance of socially, politically and culturally understanding San Diego, CA; Tijuana, Baja California, the greater U.S. and Mexico, in order to be able to adapt to the challenges they faced in their transborder environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Another critical component to understanding their environment was socially, politically and culturally understanding the U.S.-Mexico international border. Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, described crossing the Otay Mesa International Port of Entry and the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Several Transfronterizx students described developing a thorough understanding of the U.S.-Mexico international border, due to the knowledge that they acquired through their time spent crossing the border frequently. Isaac further portrayed his knowledge and understanding of the San Ysidro International Port of Entry:

I get to the border and it's like a known habitat, or like a place where I've been to so many times before, that I know what's going on, that I know that I have to go to this line, or these lines are faster, or which ones to switch, or where I can get food, like the guy from here, from the tortas or fruits, coffee, whatever. It is like a habitat; once I arrived there, I know my habitat, and I know what's around. I just don't know the unpredictability of the time that I'm going to cross or if anything's going to happen, but it does give me that sense of a familiar environment.



Figure 24. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Isaac. “It is like a habitat; once I arrived there, I know my habitat, and I know what's around.”

Isaac further described his understanding of the border as an “instinctual” and “second nature” way of knowing the politics, culture and societal factors that affect the environment at the border.

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Similarly, several Transfronterizx students also described understanding the politics at the border, such as crossing privileges via a passport, passport card and the Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card, that meant having access to faster border crossing lanes and shorter border wait times. Understanding how social issues in both nations would affect the U.S.-Mexico international border was also described as important knowledge about the border. Moreover, knowing about the culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border was critical knowledge in adapting to challenges of profiling, discrimination, racism and sexism. By far, the challenges Transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border were the most dangerous and critical to their wholistic wellbeing and development as Transfronterizx students. As a result, developing a thorough understanding of the U.S.-Mexico international border was discussed as paramount to adapting to the challenges of the border.

“BorderHacks.” One of the most pressing challenges discussed by Transfronterizx students about the U.S.-Mexico international border, was the border wait time. Transfronterizx students reported border wait times of up to four, six and even 12 hours. The obstacle of the border wait time created challenges of food and housing insecurities for Transfronterizx students. As a result, they applied various strategies and performances to ameliorate these challenges, ranging from the use of technology to do their homework anywhere, like at the border while they wait, to packing extra clothes and blankets to face the harsh weather elements during long days and nights in public spaces, transportation and their cars. During a photovoice focus group at BorderClick, Transfronterizx students called the strategies and performances that they applied to adapt to the challenges they faced as Transfronterizx students, “BorderHacks.” Since then, I’ve used that term, “BorderHacks,” when discussing processes of transborder adaptability with

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Transfronterix students, both when organizing spaces of inclusion and during photovoice focus and one-on-one interviews. Overall, “BorderHacks” is a term that resonated with Transfronterix students’ lived realities, knowledge about the U.S.-Mexico international border, and strategies and performances that they applied to adapt to the challenges they faced as a result of the border.

A baseline strategy to applying “BorderHacks” was developing the understanding that “time at the border is not to be wasted.” This understanding was the basis for their use of technology during their border wait times, commutes in public transportation and overall studying anywhere possible during their long commutes and school days and nights. During the photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews, Transfronterix students illustrated their use of technology to improvise stations to study in various public spaces. The following figures are a few of the study stations Anette, Viviana and John improvised during their transborder commute and in public spaces:

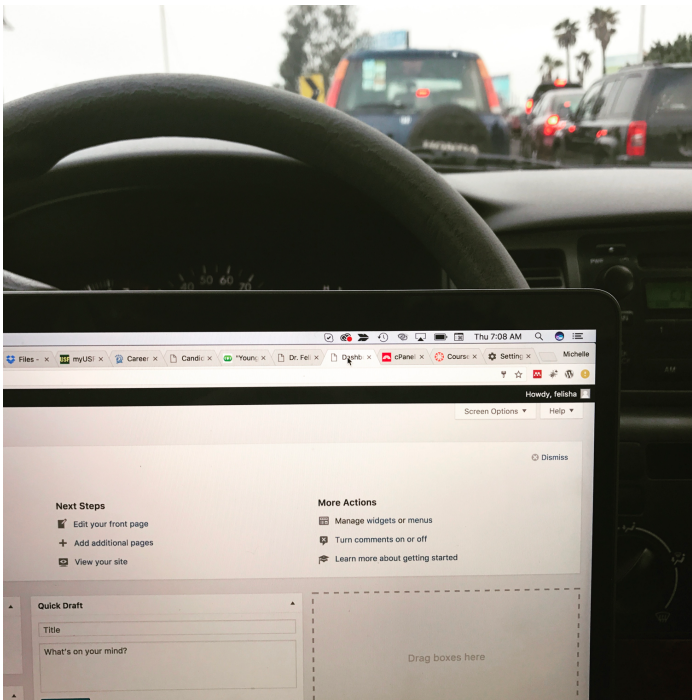


Figure 25. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Anette. “Crossing the border and multitasking on work and studies.”

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Figure 26. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Viviana. “Having to adapt means being ready to study anywhere.”



Figure 27. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by John. “I would just go through my study guides on my phone.”

Needless to say, that improvising study stations while driving and crossing the border [figure 25], or in public spaces [figure 26] were the least ideal circumstances for Transfronterixx students’ academic success. Nevertheless, Transfronterixx students in community college, undergraduate studies, and graduate studies developed and applied strategies to study during their transborder commutes.

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Having a space to study was important for Transfronterizx students in all levels of their academic development. Especially during the beginning of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, not having a home or a space to study was adverse to their academic success. DJ further explains the complexities of facing housing insecurities while trying to balance his academic success as a first-generation Transfronterizx student during his first year in the community college:

The reason I bring this up is because that struggle held me back. It held me back from going to higher ed. I'm a first generation, so I never really had the guidance, but I know that I wanted to do more with my education. I ended up going to Mesa. I applied for Mesa for like two classes. I only did one semester because I didn't have a house. I didn't have a home where I could do my homework. I didn't have that work ethic that I built along the way, that I could go to a coffee shop, that I can go to a library. That's not the way I grew up, so I never had that in my mind. For me, it was like, "I can't continue my education because I don't have a computer."

Food and housing insecurities were a serious challenge for several Transfronterizx students, and some explained this to be one of the leading factors that caused the displacement of their families in the U.S., leading them to live transborder lives. As a result, they applied various strategies to face the day-to-day challenges of living between a militarized border, while also facing food and housing insecurities. The following photographs are a few strategies that Vanessa and Viviana exhibited as “BorderHacks” to facing long days in the street, public transportation, college and the border commute:

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Figure 28. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Vanessa. “You need sturdy shoes for the long transborder commutes via pedestrian and public transportation.”



Figure 29. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Vanessa. “You need to pack extra clothes and an umbrella, because if it rains it’s not like you can just go back home to get it.”

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Figure 30. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Viviana. “It’s important to pack a blanket [Left photo] for the early cold mornings and a meal [right photo] for the long days and commutes.”

Extra clothes and blankets for early mornings starting at 4:00 AM and 5:00 AM were described as essential necessities. Perla described starting her days for school and the transborder commute as early as 1:30 AM. Other Transfronterizx students strategized while facing housing insecurities by sleeping in their cars. Access to food was also a challenge. For example, Viviana explained how buying food on-campus was not an option because it was too expensive, and how with time she learned that she needed to pack lunch to eat during her long transborder days [figure 30].

“The BorderHacks” Transfronterizx students performed were focused on ameliorating the challenges they faced as a result of the U.S.-Mexico international border. A major challenge due to the border was the long border wait times. Several students also applied for the SENTRI pass, that provided them with the privilege to cross the border through the SENTRI lane, which was of significantly lower border wait time. Yet not everyone qualified for SENTRI and there is a cost of \$140 to apply for it, that not everyone has access to, depending on their economic status. Few Transfronterizx students also performed “hacking the border” by crossing with a motorcycle. Isaac explained how he used his motorcycle as a “BorderHack”:

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It was convenient because I would save on gas; I would not have to worry about parking; I would not have to worry about the border; so, in a scale, in a balance, there was a lot of favoritism to having a bike. But as well, there is that side that it is dangerous, that it's not like a car, that you can get in an accident. But I saw it as an advantage, as a secret pass that not a lot of people have, and those few that are allowed to have it, they are able to have that advantage or benefit of not having to worry about the border wait time and not having to worry about traffic or the parking [of a car].



Figure 31. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Isaac. “Those few that are allowed to have it, they are able to have that advantage or benefit of not having to worry about the border wait time.”

Notwithstanding the thorough understandings and knowledge of the U.S.-Mexico international border that Transfronterizx students developed and the various “BorderHacks” that they applied, they described times when the border was simply impossible to cross. Due to the COVID-19

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pandemic, scrutiny at the border was heighten, significantly affecting border wait-times even more and impacting Transfronterizx students' physical and psychological well-being.

Particularly, on August 23, 2020, Trump threatened to close the border and intensified security, increasing the border wait time up to "12 hours." Several Transfronterizx students who crossed the border for essential reasons, such as work, medical and family responsibilities were significantly impacted. Isaac described trying to cross the border that day:

Since, I guess, Saturday in the afternoon, the border didn't stop growing, it got to a point where it was by La Colonia of 20 de Noviembre. Then from there on to Sunday, it went up all the way to La Central Camionera. That made lines of up to nine, 12 hours, and it was just purely insane. One person died; an older lady died because she needed medical attention. She wasn't able to get it, and one person's car caught on fire. It was chaos at the border, a lot of chaos. If I would have to say, I know the chaos was generated because of the pandemic.

The challenges Transfronterizx students faced in light of the intersections of the COVID-19 pandemic and social economic status are further explored in the *Intersections of a Transborder Identity* in-vivo themes of this dissertation. The multiple oppressions Transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and the various processes that they applied to adapt to these challenges are also further explored in the intersections of a transborder identity and race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, in-vivo themes of this dissertation.

"Las Ganas De Salir Adelante" [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead]

Hand-in-hand with adaptability was Transfronterizx students' "grit," "tenacity," "resilience," "resistencia" [Translation: resistance] and "Las Ganas de Salir Adelante" [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] in facing challenges during their transborder lives and

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academic trajectories. Specifically, “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] was instrumental to Transfronterizx students’ cognitive-structural processing in developing the courage to adapt to the challenges they faced in their transborder environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Similar to the previous in-vivo themes of this section, “Las Ganas De Salir Adelante” was also an integral concept Transfronterizx students used to ascribe meaning to their transborder identity. Arden further depicts what “Las Ganas De Salir Adelante” [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] means in reference to her transborder life, identity and academic success:

Creo que como Transfronteriza eso me ha recordado mucho de que a pesar de que hay muros que me separan, aun así eso no me ha detenido a llegar hasta dónde he llegado. Entonces por eso es que lo considero “volando alto, sin olvidar de dónde vengo.” Yo creo que también es como una identidad que he creado en mí, de que uno como persona se hace. A dónde tú llegues, nunca debes olvidar de dónde vienes porque eso es lo que te ha hecho llegar hasta donde has podido llegar. Quizás puedas llegar hacia un poco más... Transfronterizxs, porque a pesar de que tengas que cruzar la línea, que tengas que tomar transporte publico, que tengas que ir a la escuela, al trabajo, que quizá no te alcanza el tiempo, que quizás no puedes disfrutar la vida como las otras personas o como una persona Blanca, eso no significa que no lo puedes hacer. Que a pesar de que hay murallas, que a pesar de que hay cosas que te detienen, aun así las puedes alcanzar, no hay nada que te detenga.

[Translation: I think that as a Transfronteriza, that has reminded me a lot that even though there are walls that separate me, even so that has not stopped me from getting to where I am. So that's why I consider it "flying high, without forgetting where I come from." I

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believe that it is also like an identity that I have created in myself, that one as a person becomes. Wherever you go, you should never forget where you come from because that is what has made you get to where you have been able to get to. Maybe you can go a little bit further ... Transborder, because even though you have to cross the line, you have to take public transport, you have to go to school, to work, maybe you don't have enough time, maybe you don't enjoy life like other people or as a White person does, that doesn't mean you can't do it. That despite the fact that there are walls, that despite the fact that there are things that stop you, you can still reach them, there is nothing that stops you.



Figure 32. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Arden O. Martinez. “*Volando Alto Sin Olvidar De Donde Vengo.*” [Translation: Flying high without forgetting where I come from.]

Arden discusses several significant topics relating to resilience, such as the drive to reach her academic success in spite of the border as an obstacle or impediment, the balance of the

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exhausting transborder commute, work and school, and racial inequities. Arden also emphasized the salience of the factors relating to “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante,” [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] in reference to the meaning making of her transborder identity. Like Arden, participants referenced resilience as an internal drive towards rising above challenges they faced as Transfronterizx students in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and the significance this frame of mind had on their transborder identities. More specifically, “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] was often discussed by Transfronterizx students in reference to the resilience crucial to adapting to the harsh environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border, the tenacity fundamental to enduring the transborder commute, the grit required to succeeding academically, and the “resistencia” [translation: resistance] necessary to enduring the sociopolitical obstacles they and their families faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

“Mi [My] Journey from My House to The Border.” During a photovoice focus group at BorderClick, Ulises provided insights to exploring the cognitive-structural processing in Transfronterizx students’ understanding of resilience as fundamental to their endurance of the transborder commute at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. For the photovoice focus group at BorderClick, Ulises photographed a total of 40 pictures to illustrate his daily morning transborder commute to arrive to school. What was most telling about Ulises’ photographs was the stark darkness of most his pictures. However, Ulises’s photographs were not taken at night, but, instead, they were taken early in the morning, before dawn. Ulises described the first picture he took when waking up, before starting his transborder commute:

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...Ese es mi cuarto y esa es la ventana, me voy levantando y le tome una foto, nomas lo primero que veo. Antes de prender la luz, agarre mi celular y tome la foto. Me acercaba [a la ventana] y no se miraba, estaba medio dormido todavía...

[Translation: ...That's my room and that's the window, I got up and took a picture, and that's the first thing I see. Before turning on the light, I grabbed my cell phone and took the photo. I was approaching [the window] and I could not see it, I was still half asleep...]



Figure 33. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Ulises Leal. “Nomás lo primero que veo.” [Translation: Just the first thing I see.]

During the photovoice focus group, Ulises explained that the purpose of his photographs was to demonstrate his daily journey to the border during his commute to school. The quantity of

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photographs and gradual transition from darkness to light—from night to dawn to morning—revealed the long journey that he embarks on every day to arrive to college. Ulises further reflects on his photographs depicting his transborder commute to school in *figure 34*:

Quería demostrar mi journey from my house to the border, que me levanto a las 4 de la mañana... Son fotos que tomo desde allí. Entonces de allí, cuando salgo de mi casa y me voy caminando [left photo], que estoy solo; quería demostrar que no hay nadie a esa hora despierto, yo soy el unico que voy caminando y estaba bien frio, la verdad hace mucho frio a esa hora, las 5 de la mañana.

[Translation: I wanted to show my journey from my house to the border, that I get up at 4 in the morning... They are pictures I took from there. Then from there, when I leave my house and walk away [left photo], I am alone; I wanted to show that there is no one awake at that time, I am the only one that is walking through and it was very cold, the truth is that it's very cold at that time, 5 o'clock in the morning.]

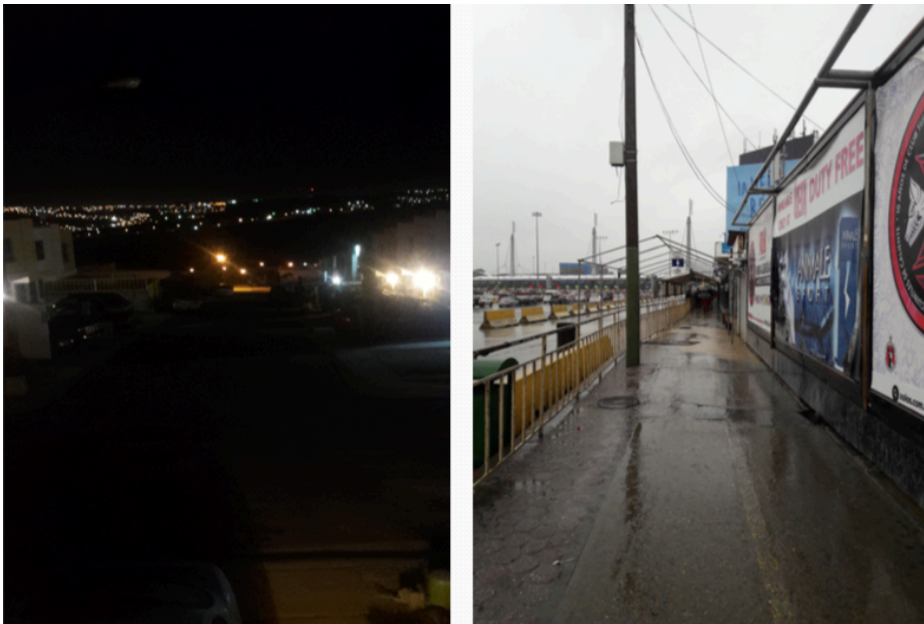


Figure 34. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Ulises Leal. “Mi [My] journey from my house to the border.”

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The key concepts that emerged during Ulises's photovoice reflections about his transborder commute were resilience, tenacity, persistence and endurance. During the photovoice focus group, participants described the transborder commute as a challenging journey that without a doubt they had to embark on every day as Transfronterizx students and how fundamental it was for them to draw from a state of mind that embodied resilience to endure the commute.

“Eso Es Lo Que Me Mantiene Siendo Transfronterizo, Las Ganas De Salir Adelante” [That is What Keeps Me Being Transborder, The Drive To Get Ahead]. Another of Transfronterizx students' cognitive-structural processes about their transborder commute, that was discussed in photovoice focus groups and photovoice one-on-one interviews, was the understanding that the rigor that they embarked on everyday drove them to pursue their academic studies with “grit” and dedication to success. Ulises provided further insights to understanding how his way of thinking about his rigorous transborder commute informed his approach to academic success as an undergraduate student:

Tengo que enfocarme más; como ponerle más énfasis o valorar más la escuela, por el aspecto de que tengo que pasar diferentes obstáculos; y eso es lo que me mantiene siendo transfronterizo, las ganas de salir adelante.

[Translation: I have to focus more; like put more emphasis or value on school, for the reason that I have to go through different obstacles; and that is what keeps me being transborder, the drive to get ahead.]

Both, Ulise's statement, “*eso es lo que me mantiene siendo transfronterizo, las ganas de salir adelante*” [translation: that is what keeps me being transborder, the drive to get ahead], and Arden's statement, “*Creo que como Transfronteriza eso me ha recordado mucho de que a pesar*

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de que hay muros que me separan, aun así eso no me ha detenido a llegar hasta dónde he llegado” [Translation: I think that as a Transfronteriza, that has reminded me a lot that even though there are walls that separate me, even so, that has not stopped me from getting to where I am], also shed light to understanding the significance the concept of resilience has in transfronterizx students’ meaning making about their transborder identities. As previously noted, Transfronterizx students’ ways of thinking about the resilience behind their transborder commute also influenced their approach to academic success. Isaac provides further insights to understanding his way of thinking about his academic success as a Transfronterizx student while reflecting on a photograph he took of the university he attends [*figure 35*]:

Every time that I arrive to State and I see this building and the bell, it gives me this feeling that I'm coming home or I'm going home. I'm going to an institution where I've done my undergraduate and now, I'm doing my graduate studies, that gave me the opportunity to become a scientist. Every time I see this building, I have mixed emotions of all that, of all the hard work that I put in, the late nights, the early mornings and crossing the border, the long nights of homework, studying. It evokes all these emotions every time I see this building...I guess, mostly every time I see it, I see all my struggles that already passed by. All those times, the late-night studies, waking up early, crossing the border, classes over-classes and classes, and then finally graduating as an undergraduate.



Figure 35. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Isaac. “Every time I see this building, I have mixed emotions of all that, of all the hard work that I put in, the late nights, the early mornings and crossing the border.”

Like Isaac, the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation study demonstrated academic excellence by successfully transferring to four-year universities, graduating and pursuing masters and doctoral degrees.

In spite of the resiliencies that Transfronterizx students exhibited in multiple areas of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, the challenges they faced were not any less difficult. Consequently, psychological and physical stressors were also discussed in relationship to the challenges Transfronterizx students faced in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, regardless of the various resiliencies and processes of adaptability that they developed and performed. For example, Josemar explained:

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So, me acostumbré [Translation: I got used to it]. I guess there was a lot of, like we were speaking earlier, a lot of resilience around. I just, somehow, some way, my brain created these coping mechanisms, and I just kind of liked it. I felt a little bit of pride that I could survive. I feel like a survivor that I could do all this shit. You know, like, kind of like a survivor and I was proud of the fact that I could live in chaos, thrive in chaos. I don't know how good that is, or how healthy that is, but that was the truth.

Moreover, the resilience that Transfronterizx students discussed was not only in relevance to the challenges they faced in their transborder commute and academic success; resilience was also a theme discussed in multiple areas of their transborder lives. Particularly, *resistencia* [resistance] was associated with the performance of crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border as an act of resistance against a sociopolitical barrier meant to separate nations and people. For example, Luis shared, “You can try to create separation, but we are the living proof that no matter how hard you try to create a boundary, we can still overcome that. And these boundaries are not omnipotent.” *Resistencia* [resistance] had a connotation of resilience, adaptability and resistance to the U.S.-Mexico international border and border enforcing policies that perpetuated social, political and racial injustices upon Transfronterizx students and their families. Illustrated by Rebecca in the reflection about her photograph in *figure 23*, she described a flower growing through concrete as a symbol of her transborder identity. Rebecca stated: “*Pensando en la flor, una planta, como un símbolo de resistencia; un símbolo de adaptabilidad; un símbolo de crecimiento*” [Translation: Thinking of the flower, a plant, as a symbol of resistance; a symbol of adaptability; a symbol of growth]. The concrete is a metaphor for the harsh environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border, and the flower is a metaphor for Transfronterizx students' abilities to live, grow and even thrive in that harsh environment. As such, *resistencia*

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[translation: resistance] was discussed by Transfronterizx students as necessary to enduring the violence perpetuated by the U.S.-Mexico international border and the sociopolitical obstacles they and their families faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Resistencia is an interwoven finding depicted throughout the in-vivo themes that inform the *intersection of a transborder identity* section of this dissertation.

Intersections of a Transborder Identity

To understand Transfronterizx students' transborder identity development, it is critical to explore the intersections of their transborder lives, academic trajectories and social identities. Transfronterizx student identified the following social identities as salient to their transborder identity development: (1) *First-Generation College Student*, (2) *Social Economic Status*, (3) *Mix-Status Families*, (4) *Foster Youth*, (5) *Race & Ethnicity*, (6) *Gender* and (7) *Sexual Orientation*. The previous findings revealed Transfronterizx students' various psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes in relation to their transborder performances and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. More specifically, Transfronterizx students' meaning making [psychosocial] and ways of thinking [cognitive-structural] about their transborder identity were explored through their photovoice stories about their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students' transborder lives revealed their development and performances: of bilingual skills in English and Spanish; sense of belonging to both nations through civic leadership and activism; and adaptability and resilience to challenges they faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

This section is dedicated to building on the understanding of Transfronterizx students' transborder identity development by exploring the intersections of their social identities and transborder lives at the U.S.-Mexico international border and the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

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In this section, the following transborder identity in-vivo themes generated and explored in the previous section: (1) “We Speak English, We Speak Spanish, We Speak Spanglish;” (2) “Soy De Aquí y Soy de Allá/ Ni Soy De Aquí, Ni Soy De Allá;” (3) “Building Bridges, Not Walls;” (4) “We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations” and (5) “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” are interwoven throughout the social identities Transfronterizx students identified as salient to build on the understanding of the intersections of their transborder identities. Similar to the previous overarching themes of this chapter, the *Intersections of a Transborder Identity* are defined by in-vivo themes transfronterizx students voiced in their meaning making of their social identities in relationship to themselves and others at the U.S.-Mexico international border and the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

First-Generation College Student

Most Transfronterizx students who participated in this study were first-generation college students. Some were not only the first in their families pursuing higher education, but also the first in their families to attend an education system in the U.S. For others of mix-status families, they navigated crossing the border and the education system entirely on their own. Nevertheless, despite Transfronterizx students’ diverse backgrounds in education, the community college was a place where most began their higher education trajectories.

“I Felt that the Community College was a Place Where I Could Start.” Dennis had a difficult higher education beginning, facing housing insecurities during his first year as a first-generation Transfronterizo community college student. This challenge halted his pursuit of a higher education and he discontinued his studies at the community college to join the workforce full-time. After three years out of college, he resumed his studies once again, this time gaining

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skills and confidence about pursuing higher education in the community college. Dennis further explained:

Later on, when I noticed that I got a feel for how that worked, during my third year in Southwestern College, I started taking more than part-time classes and I started taking full-time classes while working part-time. That's when it went by faster. *La manera que terminé en una universidad fue también porque se me hizo que, a pesar que duré muchos años* [The way I ended up in a university was also because I thought that, even though it took me many years], I was like, "wow, this is possible. It wasn't that hard. I can keep going." Because I was only going to get my associates. I was like, "I can keep going." ...When I started my journey at San Diego State, it was a great experience. I was a full-time student the whole time. I graduated with two degrees; one in Latin American Studies, and I also got a degree in Spanish.



Figure 36. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Dennis J. Arreola. "La rosa es como un símbolo de que soy el primer nieto que le pude dar un Bachelor's." [The rose is like a symbol that I am the first grandson that could give her a Bachelor's.]

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Dennis further discussed the importance of being the first grandson in his family to give his grandmother a bachelor's degree, while describing his photo in *figure 36*, explaining bringing his graduation degree and regalia to his grandmothers' tombstone in Tijuana, Baja California.

Dennis also discussed the significance of his sense of belonging to both nations, as his family was both in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, and the family support was important to his academic success.

Parallel to the skills and knowledge that Dennis acquired through time in the community college, was the transborder knowledge, understandings and performances that he developed throughout time to adapt to challenges he faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Among the societal stressors that hindered Dennis's academics success was social economic status and the challenges of housing insecurities. Dennis shared how eventually, him and his family were able to have a stable living arrangement that significantly provided the conditions he needed to succeed academically.

"I'm Not Only the First in My Family to Get a Degree, I'm also the First to Study in the U.S." The intersectionalities that negatively impacted Transfronterizx students' transborder lives compounded the difficulties of navigating the higher education system as first-generative college students. Some Transfronterizx students were not only the first in their families to pursue a higher education degree, but also the first in their families to navigate an education system in the U.S. Others, of mix-immigration status families, had to advocate for themselves, some as young children, both at the border and the school systems. At times, they were facing impunity at the border and racism in schools, while they were completely on their own. For many, the intersectionalities of navigating higher education as a first-generation college student, the transborder commute and social economic challenges significantly impacted their day-to-day

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academic success. For example, Edsel described how difficult it was for him to do well in his classes his first semester as a Transfronterizo first-generation community college student, while balancing the transborder commute, work and not having the funds to purchase a needed laptop.

Edsel further recalled while reflecting on his photo in *figure 34*:

Esta primera foto es mi computadora. La elegí porque aquí en college, la verdad es que es algo esencial tener una computadora disponible en todo momento. El primer semestre como no tenía el dinero suficiente para una laptop, sí se me complicó un poquito más, porque tenía que ir a la biblioteca, tenía que ir a las computadoras a ver si estaba disponible alguna que sirviera. Fue algo muy complicado, pero ya con la laptop, la verdad es que me ha ayudado bastante, ya nada más la llevo para todos lados, y puedo estudiar o ver mis tareas cuando quiera y donde quiera.... Sin ella, no hubiera podido avanzar en nada en mis clases, porque ya en esta época, en mi caso, ya casi no me la paso en la casa. En lo que estoy entre mi trabajo, entre la escuela y cruzar, no puedo estar en mi casa casi, no puedo hacer tarea o estudiar en la comodidad de mi casa.. Siempre tenía que tener conmigo mi laptop para poder progresar en mis tareas, para poder estudiar, ya sea en la biblioteca, en el trabajo, o tener la información a la mano.

[Translation: This first photo is my computer. I chose it because here in college, the truth is that it is essential to have a computer available at all times. The first semester, as I did not have enough money for a laptop, it did get a little more complicated for me because I had to go to the library, I had to go to the computer (lab) to see if one that would work was available. It was something very complicated, but with the laptop, the truth is that it has helped me a lot, I just take it everywhere, and I can study or see my homework whenever and wherever I want.... Without it, I would not have been able to advance any

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in my classes, because already at this time, in my case, I hardly spend time at home anymore. In what I am between my work, between school and crossing, I can hardly be at home, I cannot do homework or study in the comfort of my home. I always had to have my laptop with me to be able to progress in my tasks, to be able to study either in the library, at work, or have the information at hand...]

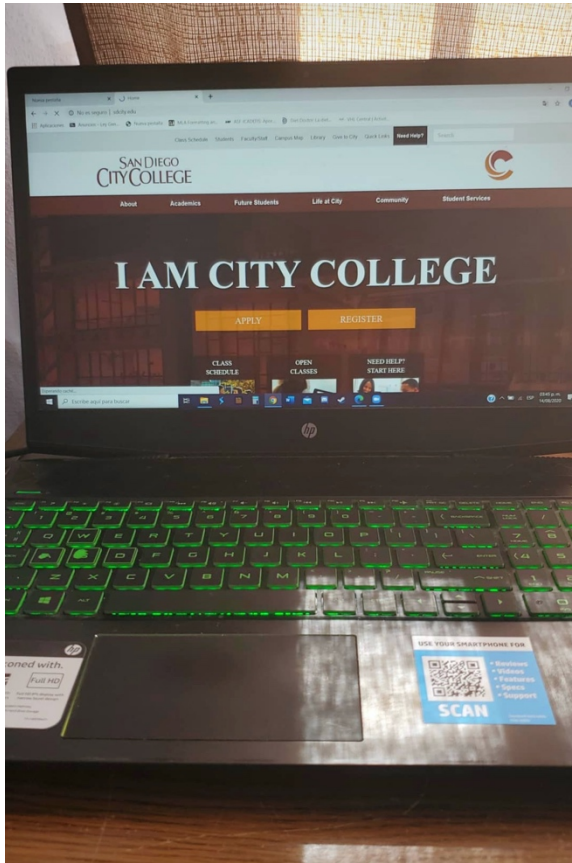


Figure 37. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Edsel. “*La llevo para todos lados, y puedo estudiar o ver mis tareas cuando quiera y donde quiera.*” [Translation: I take it everywhere, and I can study or see my homework whenever and wherever I want.]

As noted in the “BorderHacks” in-vivo theme, technology played a significant role in Transfronterix students processes of adapting to the challenges they faced as a result of the transborder commute in pursuit of their higher education. Edsel’s reflections reveal the overall

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complicated challenges of not having the proper technology for academic success due to economic difficulties. Social economic stressors negatively affected the academic success of most Transfronterizx student who participated in this dissertation. Particularly for first-generation college students, social economic stressors negatively complicated navigating higher education and their transborder lives even more.

"It Wasn't Until I Found TASO that I Felt Like I Belonged On-Campus." For many first-generation Transfronterizx college students, establishing a sense of belonging on-campus and balancing the responsibilities of their transborder lives was difficult in both the community college and higher education. For example, Sara shared information about struggles as a first-year, first-generation Transfronteriza undergraduate student, that ranged from facing housing insecurities to balancing work, commute and her transborder life, in addition to difficulties in establishing a sense of belonging on-campus. Like Sara, several first-generation Transfronterizx students shared similar struggles. Nevertheless, Transfronterizx students also identified significant peers, faculty and programs that left a positive long-lasting impression on their college experience and sense of belonging on-campus. For example, Sara recalled how her college experience positively changed when she first learned about the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU):

Then on my third year was when I discovered TASO, and I found you. That gave me a sense of belonging at the university, because even prior to that, I had already questioned: "How am I really connected to this university?" Especially since I was a commuter, I didn't really have the time to stay and do extracurricular activities or even the Aztec Nights and just being able to be on-campus. What's part of the normal college experience, for me, wasn't really an option, because I only went to class and then I had to go to work,

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or I had to study or whatnot. I really missed out on those types of activities, but when I found out about TASO, I felt I was somehow connected. I wasn't the only one going through all of these struggles. From then on, I felt like my college experience was fulfilled a bit more, because I felt some type of connection; I was able to network; I feel like it made it way richer.



Figure 38. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Sara Gonzalez-Quintero. “When I found out about TASO, I felt I was somehow connected. I wasn't the only one going through all of these struggles.”

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Sara discussed several important factors that supported her at TASO to establish a sense of belonging on campus, such as community, inclusion and cultural validation. Another organization mentioned among Transfronterizx first-generation college students in regards to establishing a sense of belonging to their on-campus college life was the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) at San Diego State University. The BorderClick program, based in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands community, was also referenced as a space for cultural validation and community by the Transfronterizx first-generation college students who participated in this study.

As noted in chapter 4 of this dissertation study, TASO, TSAP and BorderClick also served as recruitment and data collection sites for this dissertation study. As previously highlighted, these organizations are dedicated to creating spaces of cultural validation, community and inclusion for Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. The findings revealed how these organizations left a long-lasting positive impression among Transfronterizx first-generation college students, enhancing their sense of belonging on-campus in both the community college and higher education. Moreover, noted in the “Building Bridge, Not Walls” in-vivo theme of the findings, these organizations also created opportunities of culturally relevant leadership for Transfronterizx students, that overall positively informed their sense of belonging in both their college lives and Transborder lives in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana Baja California. For example, Sara further discussed how from first discovering TASO, she went on to serve in the leadership roles of Co-Vice President and Public Relations Representative at TASO.

"Transborder Student Allies Really Made a Difference." Family members, Transfronterizx peers and allies at school also had a positive influence in Transfronterizx first-

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generation college students' academic success. Represented by Dennis in *figure 36*, his family was an inspiration for being one of the first to obtain a bachelor's degree. Similarly, family support played a significant role in Transfronterizx first-generation college students' aspirations to pursue and succeed in the community college and higher education. Transfronterizx peers, who themselves were first-generation college students, also played a significant role in supporting each other in learning how to navigate the community college and higher education system and the transborder environment in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Moreover, transborder student allies served a significant role in supporting transfronterizx students to navigate community college and higher education, and to establish a sense of belonging on-campus. For example, Arden shared how her allies supported her in navigating a predominately White higher education institution, and consequently helped her establish a sense of belonging on-campus. Arden further reflected:

Ella fue mi consejera, fue mi maestra. Yo y ella creamos un bond muy fuerte. We created a strong relationship, because I felt like I was able to connect, I was able to talk about my issues as someone who didn't feel like I belonged here [on-campus]. When I actually got to Point Loma, it was really hard for me to connect with the people and even with my professors... I felt like they didn't understand me and that they saw me as someone different. Because, obviously they see it, right? They see it, because a person of color like me is walking on-campus and everyone else is White. She was someone who made me realize that I should be proud of who I am, and that I should never feel shame for being a Transfronteriza.



Figure 39. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Arden O. Martinez. “She was someone who made me realize that I should be proud of who I am ”

During our photovoice one-on-one interview, Arden discussed several sociopolitical and microaggressions that negatively impacted her academic success and sense of belonging in previous community colleges and higher education institutions that she attended, including the university that she graduated from. Yet, she also discussed the positive influence she received from faculty allies. She discussed how they were open to learning about her background, culturally validated her transborder identity, encouraged her pursuit of leadership at TASO and advocated for her in political injustices on-campus.

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Noted in *figure 32*, Arden also had an internal drive and “grit” to succeed academically, overcoming several obstacles she faced in her pursuit of higher education. Some of those obstacles included navigating living on-campus at a predominately White higher education institution and balancing her transborder life with profound family ties in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, a part of a mix-immigration status family, while also balancing academic responsibilities and work. All of these obstacles made navigating higher education as a first-generation college student even more challenging. She further depicted her photo in *figure 39*, describing her allies at graduation who really made a difference in her academic success. Like Arden, several Transfronterizx first-generation college students noted transborder student allies who were open to learning about their transborder lives and supported them in navigating the community college and higher education system, having a positive influence in their academic success.

The in-vivo themes revealed in this section were significant for all Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation study. However, for Transfronterizx first-generation college students, the challenges and supports illustrated in this section had a significant impact in their academic success as first in their families navigating a higher education system. In the following sections, I further illustrate Transfronterizx students’ intersections of their social identities and transborder lives at the U.S.-Mexico international border and San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Multiple oppressions are revealed, both on-campus and off-campus. Overall, all of the microaggressions, discrimination, racism, violence and sociopolitical injustices exhibited by transfronterizx students had a negative impact on their physical and psychological wellbeing and academic success. The support mentioned in this section played a significant influence in ameliorating some of the injustices Transfronterizx students faced. Their internal “*Ganas de*

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Salir Adelante” [Translation: Drive to get Ahead] also had a significant influence in their overall success, yet the challenges they faced were not any less difficult.

Social Economic Status

The reasons that lead Transfronterizx students to live transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands varied; yet one of the most critical was housing insecurities in San Diego and the greater California, for which they were facing displacement and seeking refuge in more affordable housing opportunities in Tijuana, Baja California. Nevertheless, Transfronterizx students who formed part of families with social, professional and academic ties in the U.S. continue to lead lives in San Diego, CA, through transborder lives in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Overall, as U.S.-citizens, Transfronterizx students performed their right of an education in the United State by living in both nations and crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border every day. In spite of their families’ efforts to ameliorate the housing insecurities they faced by living transborder lives in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, they still faced unstable living arrangement in both Tijuana, Baja California, and San Diego, CA. For many students, these challenges were during the inception of their transborder lives and throughout their education trajectories from K-12, and in postsecondary and higher education. These challenges had a negative impact in their academic success in all levels of their education trajectories.

"Focusing on School Was Hard, Because I Didn't Have a Home Where I Could Do My Homework." In previous sections, Dennis described how housing insecurities took a significant toll in his academic success, halting his studies for three years, and he joined the workforce full-time to establish a stable living arrangement in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Like Dennis, for many Transfronterizx students, housing insecurities had a negative

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impact on their academic success in postsecondary and higher education. Sara recalled facing similar housing insecurities during her first year as a Transfronteriza first-generation college student:

I remember that I had a breakdown because I was working about 30 hours a week at McDonald's... Always moving around, and I wasn't doing that well at school, just that transition from high school to college and the expectations and the workload was very heavy... There was really no way that I could connect with my family, and aside from that, the financial hardship as first gen. My mom wasn't able to help me out with rent, because she was trying to get my dad papers. They had to go to Ciudad Juarez; she was like, "I'm sorry but I can't really help you out financially." It was a very big burden on me because, to be able to stay here in the States, I had to pay for it. Even though I wanted to lower my hours at McDonald's, I really couldn't, because then that meant I didn't have a place to live.

Like Arden's story, Sara was also part of a mix-immigration status family that was living at the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands to stay together. Sara shared the importance of family, and how she lived a transborder life during her first year as a first-generation college student to continue to hold her family ties in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Yet, among the various intersectionalities that Sara shared about her transborder life, housing insecurities were the most detrimental to her psychological wellbeing and academic success.

"Just Because We Are Taking Online Classes Doesn't Mean that We Don't Have to Cross the Border During-COVID-19." Most Transfronterizx students were working-class and balanced full-time and part-time workloads along with their academic responsibilities, transborder lives and civic leadership in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. The one-

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on-one interviews for this dissertation study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the summer of 2020. These findings revealed that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, challenges for Transfronterizx students have only compounded. Many take online classes to protect their health yet, as working-class college students, they are at the forefront of the pandemic, working in food and delivery service jobs. In addition to risking their health every day, they face more scrutiny at the border, as heightened policing is enforced. Additionally, crossing one of the world's busiest borders adds to the health hazards they face, where social distancing guidelines are not implemented. In *figure 40*, Jhovanna revealed the realities that she was most recently living during the COVID-19 pandemic. Jhovanna further reflected on her photograph:

No respetan su sana distancia. Como ves en esa foto, ese día era de casi tres horas de línea, y no respetan. Sí hay gente que usa su cubrebocas y ahí tratando de tener su distancia, pero no se puede. Es raro, porque allá cuando cruzas para adentro del edificio, ahí sí te dicen que tu distancia, pero no se dan cuenta de toda la línea que hay allá afuera, y que la gente no está tomando su distancia... Estaba cruzando para trabajar. De hecho, unos compañeros llegaron primero... la línea estaba mas larga, por el otro puente, hasta allá donde está el camión rojo, por allá estaba la línea. Estaba muy lenta. Es cansancio emocional y físico porque hice tres horas de línea y aparte tengo que ir a trabajar ocho horas. 11 horas parada en un día, sin descansar.

[Translation: They do not respect their healthy distance. As you can see in that photo, that day I spent almost three hours in line, and they do not respect. Yes, there are people who use their mask, and they are trying to have their distance, but it is not possible. It's weird, because when you cross into the building, there they do tell you to keep your distance,

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but they don't realize the whole line that is outside, and that people are not keeping their distance... I was crossing to work. In fact, some colleagues arrived first...the line was longer, it was across the other bridge to where the red truck is, that's where the line was. It was very slow. It's an emotional and physical exhaustion, because I spent three hours at the line, and in addition to that, I have to go to work for eight hours. 11 hours a day on my feet without resting.]



Figure 40. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Jhovanna. “The Borderline at the San Ysidro International Pedestrian Port of Entry During COVID-19.”

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Jhovanna exhibited and expressed several physical and psychological stressors that she faced crossing the San Ysidro International Pedestrian Port of Entry during COVID-19. Evident in her photograph in *figure 40* is the lack of social distancing safety guidelines at the U.S.-Mexico international ports of entry. These are the realities that Transfronterizx students are faced with during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as they cross for essential reason, such as work, family responsibilities and medical treatment. Jhovanna advises campus leaders to be mindful that although Transfronterizx students are taking online classes, that does not mean they don't have to cross the border for essential reasons like work. Also noteworthy is that Jhovanna is a first-generation community college student. Like Jhovanna, the realities of being at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic by working in service sector jobs was most prevalent among the Transfronterizx students in the community college who participated in this study.

Mix-Immigration Status Families

The second most critical reason that led Transfronterizx students and their families to lead transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands was being at one point separated by deportation in the U.S., and their efforts in living between both nations to stay together. Noted in the previous sections, Arden and Sara provided significant reflections on this reality. Luis, Joaquin and Jovita provide further insights on their realities as Transfronterizx students of mix-immigration status families living at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

"We Lived at the San Diego-Tijuana Borderlands to Stay Together." During a photovoice focus group at TSAP, Luis reflected on the inception of his transborder life at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, and the difficulties of coming to terms with his sexual orientation identity, while facing the challenges of family separation through deportation in the U.S. Luis discussed:

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When I was 17, it was pretty rough. At that time, I was dealing with my sexual orientation, coming to terms with it. At that time, my dad got deported too. He was incarcerated for about a year and then he got deported, and then my whole family moved to Tijuana to be supportive of my dad. My mom doesn't have documents and my dad doesn't have documents, but my brother and I do, so that is why we are able to live this transborder life. So that is how I became transborder.

Like Luis, Transfronterizx students who formed part of mix-immigration status families recalled emotionally painful beginnings to their transborder lives, inflicted by sociopolitical inequities in immigration policies in the U.S.

"I Overcame Family Separation." A few Transfronterizx students who were faced with the challenges of family separation due to deportation recalled being placed in the foster-care system because their parents were detained by ICE. Family separation due to deportation also exacerbated Transfronterizx students' social economic challenges. Joaquín encountered the blunt end of the intersectionalities of family deportation and economic challenges by facing child labor in Mexico while he and his brothers tried to make ends meet during the time their father was detained by ICE for over a year. During a photovoice focus group at TSAP, Joaquin expressed critically conscious insights on the sociopolitical injustices of family separation due to deportation:

I've overcome family separation and homelessness. These are issues that intersect and sometimes are a product of failed policy in Washington, be it Congress or be it at the Executive level, going back just 20 years and the operations that the Federal Government had when it comes to immigration. My father was deported, so that kind of left the door open for my family to end up in the streets, and we saw clearly the lack of resources and

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policy, and systems that can help out a family like ours in this region, San Diego, this U.S./ Mexico region. That story is not exclusive to us, but it is really something that is shared, that a lot of people around, you know, from San Diego to Mexicali and further down, closer to the Gulf of Mexico, people go through these experiences, especially when the main bread winner in their family is taken away.



Figure 41. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photo by Joaquín Vázquez. “I’ve overcome family separation and homelessness.”

Joaquin also shared how his struggles due to family deportation drove him to fight for the social justice of immigrants through activism and civic leadership at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, Washington and abroad; and running for congress in 2019. Joaquin’s story also informs the “Building Bridges, Not Walls” in-vivo theme findings of this dissertation study. Like Joaquin, the sociopolitical obstacles Transfronterizx students faced informed their “*resistencia*” [resistance] to fight against the social injustices of border enforcing policies.

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"Graduating Meant that My Parents Weren't Going to Be There." Transfronterizx students who formed part of mix-immigration status families faced emotionally painful challenges in K-12 and in post-secondary and higher education, due to not being able to share important milestones, like their graduations, with one or both of their parents.

Graduating from high school, and what that meant was that my dad wasn't going to be there; and for the most part, my dad was one of my main motivators and my biggest cheerleader, so it was very heartbreaking, even though, I had to accept it. It was heartbreaking to know that my dad wasn't going to be there.

Like Jovita, Transfronterizx students who formed part of mix-immigration status families shared similar emotionally painful stories about graduating from higher education without the presence of their family members. Transfronterizx students who formed part of mix-immigration status families demonstrated immense "grit" towards their higher education success and civic leadership at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Heartbreaking stories like these are a reminder that in spite of their internal "*Ganas de Salir Adelante*" [translation: Drive to get Ahead] the challenges they faced were not any less difficult.

Foster Youth

Joaquin shared the emotionally painful experience of being separated from his parents and placed in the foster care system upon his fathers' detainment by ICE. Similarly, Jovita also shared having been placed in the foster care system as a child upon her father's deportation from the U.S. Being part of the foster care system is an experience that few Transfronterizx students shared yet needs to be explored to critically address the intersectionalities between Transfronterizx students' social identities and their transborder lives. Leonardo shared significant

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insights to the realities that he lived as a Transfronterizx student and foster youth living in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

"They Shouldn't Assume that Everyone Has Parents." The first lesson that Leonardo shared as a Transfronterizx foster youth was, not to assume that everyone has family privilege. Particularly, Leonardo recalled significant disturbing encounters with high school teachers who not only assumed that he had a family but were also extremely insensitive when he shared that he did not have parents. Leonardo further recalled:

Some teachers, advisers, and counselors were good and then some people were just horrible. They would always straight up tell me, "You think I have to feel sorry for you?" I was never trying to get people to feel sorry for me, it was never an excuse for me. *Si me preguntaban* [Translation: if they would ask me], where my parents were, *cuando me decían* [translation: when they would tell me], "Hey, do you have parents?" *Y les decía* [Translation: And I would tell them], "No, they passed away", *decían* [Translation: they would say], "Oh, I don't know if you're joking? Are you kidding? Are you being serious?" *Yo decía, "Sí, ¿Por qué?"* [translation: I would say, "yes, why?"]. When something bad happens to you and you are somebody that went through a trauma, you always just want to be treated the same. At least that's how I always wanted to be, *como, no me trates como, "Ay, pobrecito, eres un huérfano", sino como, "Hey, trátame igual."* *Pero hay gente que* [Translation: like, don't treat me like, "Oh, poor thing, you're an orphan," but like, "Hey, treat me the same (as others)."] But there are people who] want to show tough love or something or they're just stupid *y te dicen cosas bien feas.* [translation: and they say very ugly things to you.]

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Leonardo shared losing both his parents at the young age of 10 years old and growing up alone with his brother who was only 16. His father was a Transfronterizx worker, and his family lived in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. When his parents died, Leonardo and his brother continued their ties in both nations and their academic trajectories in the U.S. Leonardo shared the difficulties of navigating the U.S.-Mexico international border as a child with his brother, at times facing discrimination and impunity by U.S. Customs agents.

"I Fell through the Cracks of the Education System." Navigating the education system as a Transfronterizx foster youth was also difficult for Leonardo. Leonardo started his studies in Tijuana, Baja California, and a few years after his parents' death, as a U.S.-citizen, he transferred to continue his high school studies in San Diego, CA. He discussed falling through the cracks of the education system, where his high school teachers were not aware that he was a foster youth and a Transfronterizx student. Leonardo further narrated:

I feel like the school should have, at least in high school, they should have known, "All right, this kid just recently transferred here, he comes de México but he's a US-citizen and his parents passed away. Let's go and talk to him y ver qué onda". Pero no, I just got lost, I just got put in the pile with the rest y como que dicen, "Okay ahí va!" Entonces, everybody thinks that everybody has parents. Imagínate, yo me estaba muriendo de sueño a veces, because I wouldn't sleep because I had to wake up at 4:00 AM. Estaba ahí en la escuela y luego me acuerdo que el maestro me hacía burla y me decía, "Oh, you're always like sleepy", y decía cosas así y it sucked porque—They don't know, but I think what the school could do is if it's a foster kid or a kid that is an orphan, si deberían de hablar con él y deberían darles ayuda.

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[Translation: I feel like the school should have, at least in high school, they should have known, “All right, this kid just recently transferred here, he comes from Mexico but he's a US-citizen and his parents passed away. Let's go and talk to him and see what's up”. But no, I just got lost, I just got put in the pile with the rest and they kind of say, “Okay there he goes!” So, everybody thinks that everybody has parents. Imagine, I was dying of sleep deprivation sometimes, because I wouldn't sleep because I had to wake up at 4:00 AM. I was there at school and then I remember the teacher teasing me and saying, "Oh, you're always like sleepy," and saying things like that and it sucked because — They don't know. But I think what the school could do is if it's a foster kid or a kid that is an orphan, they should talk to him and give them help.]

Among the challenges that Leonardo faced in high school, the most prevalent were the lack of understanding, microaggressions and racism from teachers. Leonardo also shared facing social economic disparities and joining the workforce full-time soon after graduating from high school. He concisely explained, “I had to work to eat.” Further in his academic trajectory, Leonardo began his higher education career in the community college. After years of balancing full-time work and academics, he transferred to a four-year university. Leonardo explained the challenges of navigating the higher education system as a foster-youth, such as learning that he qualified for financial aid until years later in his academics. Like several other Transfronterizx students in this study, Leonardo also has an internal “*Ganas de Salir Adelante*” [translation: Drive to Get Ahead] and he is dedicated to becoming a mechanical engineer. Leonardo shared that, most recently, he was studying abroad in Germany; unfortunately, his studies were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but he is still dedicated to furthering his career abroad once the world is in a better place.

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Race and Ethnicity

Transfronterizx students reported facing transgressions of microaggression, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia and violence at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students reported facing racism, sexism, homophobia and violence at the U.S.-Mexico international border. Throughout their academic trajectories in the U.S. from K-12, and in postsecondary and higher education, they reported facing a lack of understanding, microaggressions, discrimination and racism perpetuated upon them by teachers, faculty, advisors and other students.

"Borders Are Man Made Just Like Racism." At the border, the transgressions transfronterizx students faced ranged from microaggression, racism and sexism, to violence inflicted on their bodies by U.S. and Mexican authorities. Trudy, Perla, David and Josemar exposed the highly policed, militarized and violent environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border through the following photovoice photos and reflections:



Figure 42. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Trudy. “In the jungle. Walking at the border if you ever look up, you walk into this. Those like hang over you, and there’s like this metal jungle.”

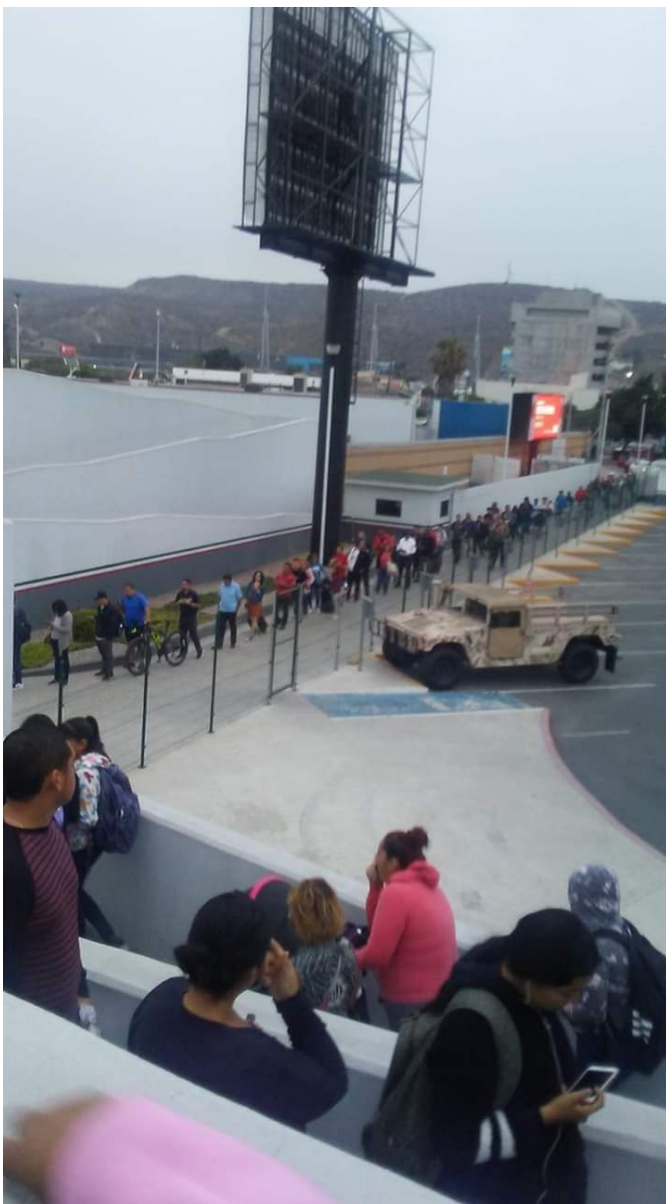


Figure 43. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Perla. “Ya no me asusta ver un carro militar a un lado de donde me estoy formando para cruzar a otro país. Es tan normal que la frontera esté tan militarizada...Es tan militarizada y desafortunadamente ya lo vemos cómo algo normal, que no debería ser normal...” [Translation: “I am no longer frightened to see a military car alongside where I am standing in line to cross into another country. It is so normal to see the border so militarized ... It is so militarized and unfortunately, we already see it as something normal and it should not be normal ... ”



Figure 44. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by David Alvarado. “Es la militarización de la frontera a través del tiempo... los cambios no nada más se manifiestan visualmente, también se manifiestan psicológicamente cuando ves algunos agentes. Cuando vas cruzando notas que algunos agentes son un poco más agresivos que otros, más prepotentes, y son menos pacientes con las personas, se vuelven más intolerantes en la línea...” [Translation: It is the militarization of the border over time ... the changes are not only manifested visually, but they also manifest themselves psychologically when you see some agents. When you are crossing, you notice that some agents are a little more aggressive than others, more oppressive, and they are less patient with people, they become more intolerant at the border...]



Figure 45. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by David Alvarado. “This was very sad, actually. This picture was from cuando empezaron a lanzar las lacrimógenas, doing the “exercises”, quote on quote. And they closed the border for 20 minutes, and I was crossing the border that day, y te digo esa no fue la primera vez que vi a ellos haciendo eso...” [Translation: This was very sad, actually. This picture was from when they started throwing the tear gas, doing an “exercise”, quote on quote. And they closed the border for 20 minutes, and I was crossing the border that day, and I tell you, that was not the first time I saw them doing this...]



Figure 46. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga. 2017 Mexican Protest Against the Hike in Gasoline Prices, at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. “There's like a line of *policias* [police] over there. And I took that photo because I saw his eyes. His eyes show that he was afraid; he didn't want to be there. He didn't want to be fighting protesters. I think about how the government, the systems put community against community. You don't see a White, rich guy, fucken literally standing in front of you, protecting his shit, his material things. You don't see that. You only see another guy. I'm sure he's not a *Federal* [Federal Agent], because he fucken has a lot of money. I don't think he's there because he's rich or because he owns the building. He's there because that's his job, and I'm sure he doesn't get paid enough to be there. He was visibly afraid.”

[**WARNING.** Next photograph is graphically violent. Viewer discretion is advised. If you prefer not to see this photograph, please turn to page 175.]



Figure 47. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga. 2017 Mexican Protest Against the Hike in Gasoline Prices, at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. “Nobody wanted to be there. And that's my friend, actually, after violence broke out. One of those mother fuckers that I took a photo of, *le pegó en la cabeza con un palo* [Translation: They hit him on the head with a stick]. And yeah, I saw how they started beating him up and, suddenly, *se lo llevaron* [Translation: they took him], they dragged him. *Y pues* [Translation: And Well], they let him go, but he kind of ran away sort of. As soon as he had a chance, *púm! se fué* [translation: pum! he left!]. And he was getting stitches when I found him. I took some photos as evidence of what the state was doing.”

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Evident in Trudy's, Perla's, David's and Josemar's photographs is the overwhelmingly militarized, hostile and violent environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border.

Transfronterizx students often reported psychological stressors relating to anxiety, stress and depression associated with crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border. They also expressed physical stressors associated with exhaustion, dehydration and malnutrition due to long border wait times and transborder commutes. Beyond physical stressors, the infliction of violence upon the bodies of Transfronterizx students has also been reported. Specifically, in *figure 47*, Josemar further reflected on the day he crossed the border on November 25th, 2018, during the teargas attack by the U.S. Border Patrol system at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry, and how he was hit, and other people were severely injured by the teargas bombs.

The highly policed, militarized, hostile and violent environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border has a significant impact on Transfronterizx students psychological and physical wellbeing and overall academic success. The heightened scrutiny and constant closures of the border have also directly blocked Transfronterizx students' access to cross the border and arrive to school. At times Transfronterizx students have reported being late to class or not being able to make it at all, due to closures of the border, because of military drills like the teargas "exercise" illustrated by David in *Figure 45*. Transfronterizx students have also reported noticing a culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border, reaching a peak during the Trump era. They account transgressions that range from racism and sexism to a culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border. The multiple oppressions transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border were most openly discussed when addressing the intersections of their social identities of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation and crossing the border.

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“Racismo en la Escuela.” [Translation: Racism at School] Transfronterizx students reported facing lack of understanding, microaggressions, discrimination and racism by teachers, faculty, advisors and students throughout their academic trajectories in the U.S. from K-12, and in postsecondary and higher education. For example, Leonardo and Joaquín reported having teachers in high school who would slam books on their desks if ever they would fall asleep in class, not understanding the extremely early mornings that they would embark on daily for their transborder commutes to arrive to class on time. David shared the microaggressions of two teachers in high school who would together shout “La linea boy!” [Translation: The border boy!] in a derogatory tone, whenever he would come across them on-campus. Sara remembered being labeled as the “bad student” in elementary school for being late to class due to circumstances beyond her control, such as housing insecurities and the long border wait times.

Katz, Leonardo and Nanitzia further recalled facing and witnessing discrimination and racism in high school, the community college and higher education. Katz discussed the discrimination of an instructor in the community college who would pretend not to understand her English when she would try to explain to her why she was late to class due to the border being longer than usual. Katz recalled:

En una ocasión quise explicarle que tuve un problema con la línea, yo sé que me puedo levantar a las cuatro de la mañana, pero esa vez la neta la línea estuvo súper larga, bueno quise hablar con ella, pero no me dio la oportunidad de hablar, sus respuestas eran siempre menospreciativas ante mi Inglés, me decía despectivamente: “¿Qué? ¿Qué?” Hacía como que no me entendía lo que le hablaba, le valía, y menos le importaba todo el esfuerzo que hacíamos los Mexicanos para viajar por horas para llegar a su clase, y esa actitud me bajo la autoestima terriblemente, yo me decía: “La

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profesora sabe que somos Mexicanos y nos trata mal adrede. Para ese entonces, en ese semestre había también un profesor de sociología, un Chicano, y cuando le hablabamos de este tema, el si lo valoraba bien y con él empecé a tener otra perspectiva, a sentir que: “¡Sí, es cierto, somos una gran comunidad!” “¡Y claro que si valemos!” “¡Porque somos Mexicanos, no tenemos que sentirnos menos!”

[Translation: On one occasion I tried to explain to her that I had a problem with the borderline, I know that I can get up at 4 AM in the morning, but that time the truth is the line was super long, well I wanted to talk to her, but she didn't give me the opportunity to speak, her responses were always disparaging to my English, she would condescendingly say to me: “What? What?” She pretended that she did not understand what I was talking about, she didn't care, and she didn't care about all the effort that we Mexicans made by traveling for hours to get to her class and that attitude terribly lowered my self-esteem, I told myself: “The teacher knows that we are Mexican, and she deliberately treats us ill.” During that time, that same semester, there was also a sociology professor, a Chicano, and when we talked to him about this topic, he did value it well, and with him I began to have another perspective, to feeling that: “Yes, it's true, we are a grand community!” “And of course, we matter!” “Because we are Mexicans, doesn't mean we have to feel less than!”

As Katz discussed, during the same semester that she was facing discrimination, she also had a Chicano, sociology professor who served as a transborder student ally. As previously discussed in the findings “Transborder Student Allies Really Made A Difference.” Transborder student allies were faculty open to leaning about transfronterizx students' transborder lives, advocated and supported them in navigating community college and higher education. Evidently, Katz's

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sociology professor, who also served as her ally, was open to listening about her and her peers' transborder realities and encouraged them to take pride in their transborder culture and Mexican ethnicity. The fact that Katz's sociology professor was open to learning about her transborder realities and was empowering towards her ethnic and cultural identities had a significant positive influence on her development in the community college, especially in light of facing discrimination by another professor. Katz's transborder student ally had a positive influence in her cognitive-structural and psychosocial development in the community college through the following:

- (1) Psychosocial development through empowerment: The encouraging and empowering lectures to her and her peers about taking pride in their transborder culture and Mexican ethnicity supported her psychosocial development by ameliorating the internalization of the discrimination she was facing.
- (2) Cognitive-structural development through shifts in reasoning to de-internalizing discrimination: Katz narrated initially having her self-esteem lowered because of the discrimination she and her Transfronterizx peers were facing. However, influenced by the encouraging empowerment of her transborder student ally, she described her cognitive-structural processing to de-internalizing discrimination through her shift in reasoning from internalizing discrimination to de-internalizing discrimination by the empowerment of thinking that she is part of a grand community, that they do matter, and that they are not less than, even in spite of discrimination.

Katz further discussed that in light of this experience, she was empowered to take pride in her transborder identity and Mexican ethnicity and advocated for herself against discrimination.

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Evident in Katz' story and in Arden's previously noted story is the positive influence that transborder student allies had in Transfronterizx students' success and development in postsecondary and higher education. In spite of the support, discrimination and racism in the school systems negatively impacted Transfronterizx students' academic success in all levels of education, leaving emotional scars that students recalled no matter how much time had passed. Unlike Katz, unfortunately Leonardo did not have allies that encouraged him to take pride in his transborder identity, Leonardo is currently in higher education, however years later he still recalls the racism he faced, perpetuated by peers in high school. Leonardo shared his memories of racism in high school:

When I was going to high school, and the other students knew that I was from TJ, they would obviously make fun of it. Perfect instances de cuando I was taking Japanese, and we went to Little Tokyo in LA y pasamos por un immigration officer, y todos como que, "Hey Leonardo, here's the immigration officer." O pasaba como un border patrol truck y me decían, "Hey man, hide Leonardo; he's going to get deported." Cuando, I'm an American citizen. Ellos nomás decían, "Es un pinche ilegal!" There was a lot of that in school.

[Translation: When I was going to high school and the other students knew that I was from TJ, they would obviously make fun of it. Perfect instances of when I was taking Japanese and we went to Little Tokyo in LA, and we went by an immigration officer, they all (said) like, "Hey Leonardo, here's the immigration officer." Or we would go by a border patrol truck and they'd say, "Hey man, hide Leonardo; he's going to get deported." When, I'm an American citizen. They would just say, "He's a fucking illegal!" There was a lot of that in school.]

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Although Leonardo did not have the lived reality of being an undocumented student, he shared how, nonetheless, the derogatory and hateful tone in which he was being called racist slurs by his peers was emotionally hurtful.

To say the least, racism and discrimination in school systems perpetuates an oppressive campus climate for all students of color. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nations around the globe. Specifically, in the U.S., the nation was impacted by a double pandemic of both COVID-19 and racism coupled with police brutality and murder of innocent Black people in the country. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, education systems throughout the nation of the United States transitioned to online instruction, yet campus communities were not safe from the oppression of White supremacy online. Nanitzia discussed her frustration to White supremacist students invading a zoom meeting given by her university, intended as a safe space of dialogue online for Black students and Black faculty, centering on discussions on Black Lives Matter. Nanitzia further shared:

Durante el movimiento de Black Lives Matter, UCSD hizo un webinar para que los estudiantes y profesores hablaran sobre lo que estaba pasando, sobre lo que querían y todo. White supremacist students se metieron al Zoom call, entonces es como que esta idea de, "Tu como institución ni siquiera puedes limit and control este environment," aunque es en Zoom. O sea si esto es en Zoom, no nos imaginábamos como hubiera sido en persona. Por eso, un poco más de empatía por parte de la institución, tanto los profes como los Estudiantes es necesario.

[Translation: During the Black Lives Matter movement, UCSD hosted a webinar for students and professors to talk about what was happening, what they wanted and everything. White supremacist students got into the Zoom call, so it's like this idea of,

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"You as an institution can't even limit and control this environment," even though it's in Zoom. So, if this is in Zoom, we could not imagine how it would have been in-person. Therefore, a little more empathy on the part of the institution, both by the professors and the students is needed.]

Racism in all its shapes and forms creates an unsafe campus climate for all students, whether facing it or witnessing it. Nanitzia is not Black nor Afro-Latina; however, she expressed how the White supremacy and racism against the Black campus community in her university raised her vigilance to the fact that if universities can't control racism online, she can't even imagine what an in-person instruction will be like in light of the nations' and universities' in the U.S. current lack of safety against White supremacy and racism. Nanitzia further called for the empathy of her university, as an institution, towards issues of racism against the Black campus community.

Gender

In this section, to address gender, I will first address the language used in this dissertation to identify Transfronterizx students. Firstly, I use the Spanish translation *Transfronterizx* instead of the *Transborder* term in English, because this is the term congruent with the literature on Transfronterizx students; however, most importantly, the term *Transfronterizx* is used in the community the most, instead of the term *Transborder*. Secondly, I use the term *Transfronterizx* instead of *Transfronterizo*; thus, using and "x" instead of an "o." In traditional Spanish grammar, plural nouns end with an "o", and are also considered masculine regardless of gender for both men and women. However, for this dissertation, I use *Transfronterizx* with an "x" instead of an "o" to generally refer to all the Transfronterizx students who participated in this dissertation in order to apply inclusive language to diversity in gender and gender expression. However, if a participant refers to himself/herself as Transfronteriza, Transfronterizo, or Queer

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Transborder, that have been the terms most used by participants during photovoice focus groups and one-on-one interviews in reference to themselves and their transborder identity, I will utilize the same term that they use to define themselves. This variation of language was mostly used by participants when discussing the intersectionalities of gender, sexual orientation and their transborder lives. Thus, the variations of language in reference to Transfronterizx students' self-identification towards their transborder identities will mostly be illustrated in this section and the following section of this dissertation. Transfronterizx students who identified as cis women went by the pronouns, she, her and hers and mostly used the term *Transfronteriza* when referring to themselves and their transborder identity, and most specifically when addressing the intersections of their transborder lives and gender at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and at the U.S.-Mexico international border. Likewise, Transfronterizx students who identified as cis men went by the pronouns, he, him and his, and mostly used the term *Transfronterizo* when referring to themselves and their transborder identity, and most specifically when addressing the intersections of their transborder lives and gender at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and at the U.S.-Mexico international border. One participant self-identified as a *Queer Transborder Person of Color* and went by the pronouns of he, him and his when discussing his transborder identity, and most specifically when addressing the intersections of his transborder life and sexual orientation at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and at the U.S.-Mexico international border.

The multiple oppressions transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were most extensively discussed when addressing the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation and their transborder lives. As previously discussed by Perla and Josemar in the in-vivo theme "*Soy de Aquí, y Soy de*

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Allá” [translation: I am from Here, And I am from There], Transfronterizx students indeed faced the double jeopardy of challenges in both nations—the U.S. and Mexico. For example, Transfronterizo men discussed being profiled as criminals by U.S. Customs agents and Mexican police. Transfronteriza women’s most pressing issue discussed was feminicide along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the greater Mexico. Luis, who identified as a Queer Transborder Person of Color and Mexican, emphasized that homophobia is prevalent in both Mexico and the U.S. The multiple oppressions Transfronterizx students faced, and how they navigated their transborder lives despite oppression are further illustrated in this section and the following section, through the participants’ voices in in-vivo themes.

"At the Border, Officers Profile Us as Criminals." Transfronterizx students often discussed the concern of being profiled as criminals by U.S. Customs agents when crossing the U.S.-Mexico international border, due to their age, Mexican ethnicity and gender. This concern was often followed by discussions of incidents when their vehicle or bodies had been detained and inspected by canine units that ultimately released them as innocent. Regardless of being released, these incidents were described as overall ordeals for themselves and loved ones who witnessed the incidents, and they hindered their academic success. Like the racism that Transfronterizx students experienced in schools and universities, being profiled and detained by authorities at the border also left emotional scars that they still recalled no matter how much time had passed by. David recently began his studies as a master’s student, yet he still remembers times when he “felt profiled as a criminal” by U.S. Customs agents. He further narrated a time when he, his brothers and mother were detained by U.S. Customs agents when crossing the border during his high school years:

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This is back when I was in high school...cruce con mamá y mis dos hermanos, éramos tres en la camioneta de mamá, cruzamos la frontera en Otay, y no manejamos más de cinco minutos and a patrol car puts his lights up, y nos paran, y nos preguntan: ¿A dónde van? ... básicamente nos ordenaron que nos bajáramos...entonces nos bajamos y de pronto llegan otros [U.S. Customs agents], entonces ya eran cuatro, y nos separaron a mi y mis hermanos y mi mamá; y nos seguían preguntando: “¿De dónde vienen? ¿A dónde van? ¿Qué hacen aquí? ¿Qué estudian? ¿Si es tu mamá?” Recuerdo que al terminar sus preguntas dijeron que estaban esperando que llegara el canine para ver si no había nada raro, en ese entonces yo estaba enfadado y mi mamá también, yo lo sentí como un atropello, creo que pensaban que el carro era robado, no sé. Hay fue entonces donde nos obligan a sentarnos en la banqueta. De ahí, yo baje y dije: “¡Yo no me voy a sentar en la banqueta, porque yo no hice nada malo!” ... “nosotros no somos unos criminals!” ...I felt profiled. Después ya nos hicieron sentarnos en el curb, le dije, “Why are you forcing us to sit on the curb like we're criminals?” y él me dijo “We're not. So, this is where you sit down, or we make you sit down!” This happened to my brothers too. When they were done, and they checked the car, nothing happened, and they let us go.

[translation: This is back when I was in high school ... crossing with mom and my two brothers, it was three of us in mom's truck, we crossed the border in Otay, and we didn't drive more than five minutes and a patrol car puts his lights up, and they stopped us, and they asked us: Where are you going? ... They basically ordered us to get off... then we got off and suddenly, others [U.S. Customs agents] arrived, so there were already four of them, and they separated me and my brothers and my mother; and they kept asking us: “Where do they come from? Where are you going? What are you doing here? What are

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you studying? Is this really your mom?" I remember when they finished their questions, they said that they were waiting for the canine to arrive, to see if there was anything strange. At that time, I was aggravated, and my mother was too, I felt like I was being trampled upon, I think they thought the car was stolen, I don't know. It was then that they forced us to sit on the curb. From there, I got down and said: "I'm not going to sit on the sidewalk, because I didn't do anything wrong!" ... "We are not criminals!" ... I felt profiled ... after they made us sit on the curb, I said, "Why are you forcing us to sit on the curb like we're criminals?" and he said "We're not. So, this is where you sit down, or we make you sit down! "This happened to my brothers too. When they were done, and they checked the car, nothing happened, and they let us go.]



Figure 48. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by David Alvarado. "Cruzamos la frontera en Otay... a patrol car puts his lights up, y nos paran, y nos preguntan: ¿A dónde van? [Translation: We crossed the border in Otay... a patrol car puts his lights up, and they stop us, and they ask us: Where are you going?]

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David's photographs and discussions that led him to reflect back to times when he felt "profiled" and treated like a criminal by U.S. Customs agents were the photovoice photos in *figure 44* and *figure 48*; the topic of discussion for these photographs was the culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border. David's description reveals several instances of impunity by U.S. Customs agents. The most obvious is when an officer tells him, "So, this is where you sit down, or we make you sit down!" David further discussed how because of that incident he was terribly late to high school, not being able to make it to his first class at all. David also shared how he was emotionally upset and anxious for his entire school day.

Transfronterizx students discussed their understanding of the culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border, and how as a result, they applied various "BorderHacks" to avoid being harassed and detained by customs agents. Transfronterizo students discussed how they applied strategies to avoid being profiled as criminals by U.S. Customs agents and took steps to streamline their inspections in order to cross the border on a timely manner. Dennis discussed the steps that he would take right before crossing the port of entry to streamline the inspection of his vehicle, such as lowering the windows, turning on the lights inside, and putting down the back seats. However, he emphasized that the most important step to avoid being profiled at all was having his university's parking permit visible on his car. Dennis further explained:

Es importante mencionar que tenía la foto del parking permit siempre presente y todo, para que no me dieran problemas, para hacer el cruce mas fácil. Porque al parecer, the border agents don't really know that we have transborder classes. A veces no te creen y te hacen más preguntas. Sí, esto es lo que representa esta foto en realidad.

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[Translation: It is important to mention that I had the photo of the parking permit always present and everything, so that they would not give me problems, to make the crossing easier. Because apparently the border agents don't really know that we have transborder classes. Sometimes they don't believe you and ask you more questions. Yes, this is what this photo actually represents.]

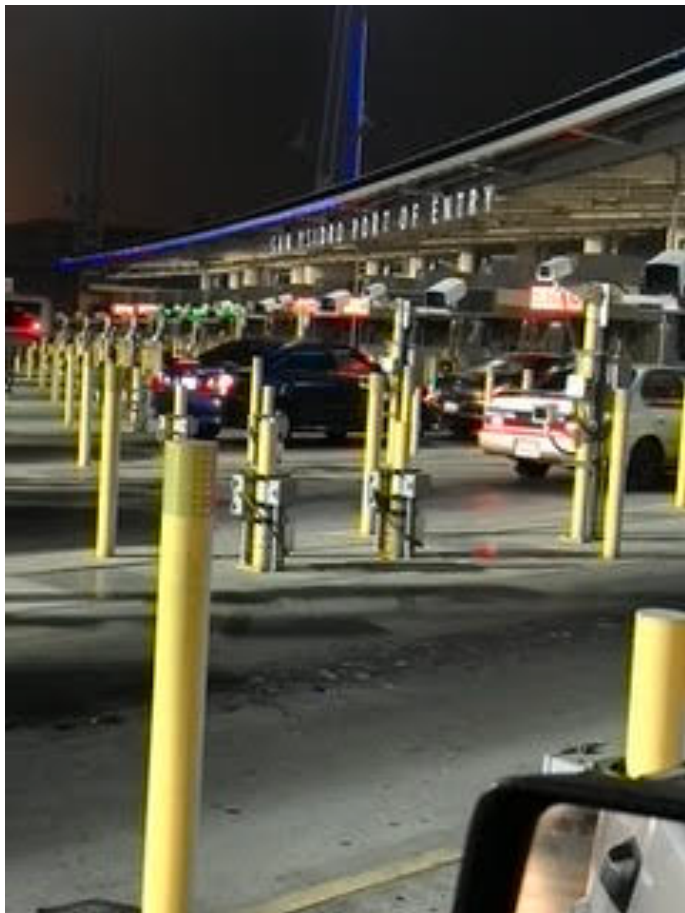


Figure 49. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Dennis J. Arreola. “Antes de cruzar...” [translation: Before crossing...]

During higher education, Dennis significantly crossed the border to take transborder classes in Tijuana, Baja California, provided by his university in San Diego, CA. Dennis explained that as a Transfronterizx student he had a thorough understanding of the border, and the cities of San

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Diego and Tijuana, yet navigating being profiled by police on both sides of the border was still difficult and nerve wracking, nonetheless.

“La Policia en México Nos Para Más.” [translation: In Mexico we Get Pulled Over by Police More Often]. Dennis also had to navigate being profiled by police in Mexico. While Dennis was explaining how he strategized to avoid being detained by U.S. Customs agents when crossing the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry (describing *figure 49*), he recalled how he faced similar challenges with Mexican police. Specifically, he recalled crossing the border from San Diego for a transborder class at a university in Tijuana, and how he was stopped by Mexican police on his way to class. Particularly, he described how that day he was commuting with a classmate from San Diego that was unfamiliar with the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Dennis explained various strategies that he applied to try to convince the Tijuana police to release them and to ensure their safety, from instructing his classmate to text his professors to communicate to them that they had been stopped by police, to pleading with officers to release him and his friend. Dennis described the dialogue in Spanish that he had with Mexican police to finally convince them to release him and his classmate:

"Somos estudiantes, ¿por qué se portan así?" Me comporté muy agüitado, porque todo mi punto era, "¿Por qué nos hacen esto si somos estudiantes?" A mi amigo lo pusieron a otro lado. Le dije, "Él no sabe nada; él nomás viene aquí. Mira como está, está nervioso". "¿Por qué te pones así?"

"Me pongo así porque no voy a poder llegar a clase porque me tienes aquí".

[Translation: "We are students. Why are you behaving like this?" I behaved very agitated, because my whole point was, "Why are you doing this to us if we are students?" They put my friend on the other side. I told him, "He doesn't know anything; he just comes here.

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He looks at how he is; he's nervous." "Why do you get like that?" "I get like that because I won't be able to get to class because you have me here."

Dennis was detained by Mexican police, similarly to how David and his family were detained by U.S. Customs agents. In both incidents, in the U.S and Mexico, they were ultimately released because they were innocent. Incidents like these directly halted their abilities to arrive to class on time, yet what was described as being most detrimental was the anxiety and stress that stayed with them throughout the school day and beyond. Like Dennis, Transfronterizo students adapt in various forms and apply several "BorderHacks" to avoid being profiled by police on both sides of the border. Their ultimate goal is to avoid ordeals such as these to ultimately make it to class on-time. Dennis' descriptions of how he navigated his environment to avoid being profiled by police highlights how Transfronterizo students' understanding of their transborder environment, that consist of both San Diego; Tijuana, and the U.S.-Mexico international border, is instrumental to navigating the multiple oppressions they face in their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Dennis' description of the dialogue he had with Mexican police in Spanish also sheds light into understanding how Transfronterizo students' language proficiency is instrumental to navigating the oppressions on both sides of the border. In spite of their abilities to adapt to these challenges, they describe the harassment by police as traumatic and detrimental to their psychological wellbeing and academic success. Dennis advises campus leaders on both sides of the border to educate Customs agents and police on the realities that there are both transborder classes between universities in both nations and Transfronterizo students who cross the border, with the goal that with this information police will treat students crossing the border with less scrutiny and abuse of power.

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"Muchas Veces Me Tengo Que Aguantar El Acoso De Los Oficiales." [Translation: "Many times I have to Put-Up with Sexual Harassment from Officials."] Like Transfronterizos, Transfronterizas also faced oppressions at the U.S.-Mexico International Ports of entry. The type of oppression they reported the most was sexual harassment by U.S. Customs agents. Transfronterizas reported sexual harassments that ranged from unwanted male gazes and personal questions about their relationship status, to being asked to remove layers of clothing and being followed to their sites of employment, beyond the proximities of the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry, after crossing the border. Ivette is currently a double master's student, yet she clearly recalls when she was patted down by customs agents while crossing for prom in her prom dress:

So, then I start my first year of college, and during that time, I was old enough to understand, but I did not really understand what I had lived through, because to me it was just so normal. Like, I remember for prom I would go to Tijuana. I remember, me maquillaron y todo, and when I crossed back, for some reason, CBP officers stopped me y me dijeron, "Okay, we have to pat you down," and I'm like, "Pat me down?" "What? "On the day of my high school prom." Y yo como que, "No puede ser." But at the same time, because I had already crossed the border so many times, to me it was so normal, to the point that my dad would be like, "Es que tienen que actuar de cierta manera." Like everything we had to do was for us to not be singled out.

[Translation: So, then I start my first year of college, and during that time I was old enough to understand, but I did not really understand what I had lived through, because to me it was just so normal. Like, I remember for prom I would go to Tijuana. I remember I got my make-up done and everything, and when I crossed back, for some reason, CBP

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officers stopped me and told me, "Okay, we have to pat you down," and I'm like, "Pat me down?" "What?" On the day of my high school prom. " And I'm like, "It can't be." But at the same time, because I had already crossed the border so many times, to me it was so normal, to the point that my dad would be like, " Act in a certain way." Like everything we had to do was for us to not be singled out.]

Ivette recalled other incidents of sexual harassment perpetrated by U.S. Customs agents at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry, and how she has reflected on these traumatic incidents throughout her college years, realizing how those incidents were not normal, even if she normalized the trauma at the time.

Transfronterizas discussed how the trauma of facing sexual harassment at the border affected their psychological wellbeing by describing the transgressions they faced through words like anxiety, fear, and depression. During a photovoice focus group at BorderClick, Ale provided optics to understanding the detrimental impact that sexual harassment at the border had on her psychosocial identity development as a Transfronteriza. Specially, Ale used the three words in Spanish: "Miedo" [Fear], "Acoso" [Sexual Harassment], and "Ansiedad" [Anxiety] to describe her internal voice and feelings to facing sexual harassment at the border. Beyond words, Ale took the following photographs to represent and voice the trauma that she and other women experience when facing sexual harassment at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry.



Figure 50. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Ale Uzarraga. “*Miedo,*” “*Acoso.*” [Translation: “Fear,” “Sexual Harassment.”]



Figure 51. Photovoice focus group at BorderClick, photo by Ale Uzarraga. “*Ansiedad*”

[Translation: Anxiety]

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Ale shared that she is a photographer and educator working with at risk youth on both sides of the border. As previously discussed in the “Building Bridges, Not Walls” findings of this dissertation, civic leadership on both sides of the border is salient to Transfronterizx students’ meaning making of their transborder identity. Similarly, Ale discussed how her leadership in both Tijuana, Baja California, and San Diego, CA, was integral to her identity as a transfronteriza at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Yet, the trauma of sexual harassment at the border significantly hindered her psychosocial and cognitive-structural development. During a photovoice focus group at TSAP, Ale re-visited her photographs representing the sexual harassment at the border that she had faced and shared how the photographs were meant to portray her feelings and thoughts when facing that trauma. Ale further discussed:

Muchas veces, me tengo que aguantar el acoso de los oficiales [de CBP] y quedarme callada para no perder ese privilegio de poder cruzar tan rápido. Entonces, cuando empezamos a hablar de cómo se sienten nuestros cuerpos y nuestras mentes; pues, esta fue la foto con la que más conecté y quise simbolizar cómo se sienten mi cuerpo y mi mente cuando cruzó la frontera.

[Translation: Many times, I have to put up with the sexual harassment of the [CBP] officers and keep quiet not to lose that privilege of being able to cross so fast. So, when we start talking about how our bodies and minds feel; well, this is the photo I connected with the most, and I wanted to symbolize how my body and mind feel when they cross the border.]

As mentioned, Ale’s leadership on both sides of the border was integral to her sense of self and identity as a Transfronteriza, that is why it was important for her to cross the border and cross the border on time to arrive to her leadership roles in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California.

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She shared how she internalized the sexual harassment, thinking about how she had to tolerate the trauma, in order to cross the border on time. Ale provides a lens through her photographs and discussions, to understanding her cognitive-structural processes of the trauma of sexual harassment at the border, and the psychological stressors that she is faced with by portraying her feelings of fear in *figure 50* and anxiety in *figure 51*. As a result, Ale also provides a lens to understanding the detriment that the perpetuation of sexual harassment upon Transfronterizas has on their psychosocial identity development and transborder identity development at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Transfronteriza students also discussed performing various strategies and “BorderHacks” to avoid facing sexual harassment by U.S. Customs agents at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. “BorderHacks” ranged from changing their demeanor and wearing specific types of clothing to cross the border, to taking “Know Your Rights at the Border” trainings to advocate for themselves in the case of sexual harassment. Sara explained, “I’m always on a defensive mode. Generally, when I cross the border, especially if it’s men. I can’t say that all of the CBP officers have been rude or have harassed, but a couple have messed it up for everyone, at least for me.” Sara further explained how she used a specific type of dialogue when crossing the border and speaking with U.S. Customs agents:

I feel sometimes they use their power of authority to get girls. It’s not the time to be doing that. Obviously, we tell them what they need to hear, so they can just let you go. If you stick to the answers that they want to hear, they continue to ask you if you’re very, very persistent. I tend to be just very straightforward. “No, sir. Yes, sir.” Just to establish that, “don’t ask me personal intimate questions, because I will not answer them, because I’m being very professional.” It has been something that I’ve adapted over time based on

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more information than I get about how to talk to CBP, that's how I've been able to get to this point.

Sara's insights further inform the in-vivo theme of this dissertation, "We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations," by providing a lens to how she developed skills, knowledge and understands in her time crossing the border, to be able to adapt to the challenges of facing sexual harassment at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. Part of Sara's understandings is knowing about the culture of impunity at the border. This is evident as she explains, "I feel sometimes they use their power of authority to get girls." Additionally, Sara discussed how the knowledge that she acquired through time about the culture of impunity at the border and sexual harassment by U.S. Customs agents had been through facing and witnessing incidents of sexual harassment. Clearly exhibited by Ale, regardless of Transfronterizas resilience and intelligence to adapting to a culture of impunity at the border and sexual harassment by U.S. Customs agents, the overall ordeals of these oppressions are traumatic and detrimental to their psychological wellbeing and transborder identity development.

"El Femicidio Es Una Realidad En La Frontera." In the previous findings, "*Soy de Aquí, y Soy de Allá,*" Transfronterizx students' profound ties and sense of belonging to San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, were exhibited. Transfronterizx students noted that they also faced challenges prevalent in both the U.S. and Mexico. Perla explained, "*Gozamos de las virtudes de ambos países, pero también vivimos los desafíos de ambos países.*" [Translation: We enjoy the virtues of both countries, but we also live the challenges of both countries]. Among the challenges that Perla discussed was the femicide crisis in Mexico, at the San Diego-Tijuana border region and along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The fear, worry, and vigilance of femicide were discussed by Transfronteriza students as they portrayed how this reality affected

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their day-to-day transborder performances at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronteriza students' interactions in vigilance of feminized ranged from worrying about ending classes late in San Diego and navigating Tijuana at night, to wearing shoes that would allow them to run in case of an attack, to being prepared with pepper spray and taking self-defense trainings. Sara further discussed her worries about the realities of femicide in Mexico and at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

When I saw that in Mexico City, it really related to me and I knew that I'd carry that with me everywhere I went, just in the way, and this is also going back to transborder, because living in the borderlands is very violent and as a girl, even more violent. The way that I carry myself out in terms of my actions is very relevant to living in the border. When I lived in TJ, my house was robbed like three or four times. As a girl walking down the street, you get catcalls all the time, but you never know if that catcall is going to lead to someone kidnapping you.

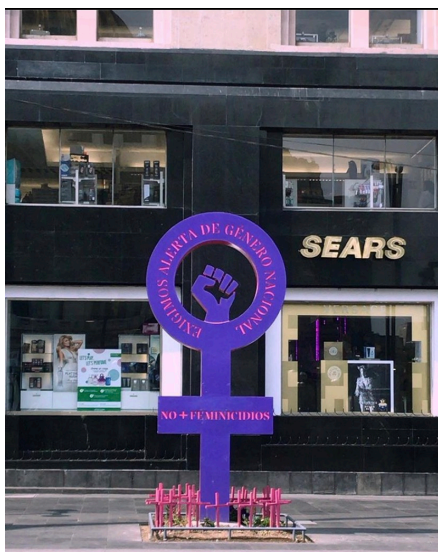


Figure 52. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Sara Gonzalez-Quintero.

“NO+FEMINICIDE: WE DEMAND A NATIONAL GENDER ALERT.” June 28, 2019
at Mexico City.

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Perla also shared similar concerns. Her biggest worry was ending classes late at her university in San Diego and crossing the border and navigating the city of Tijuana via pedestrian by herself at night. Perla further explained:

Especially consider some women that have safety issues. Maybe you're like, "In the US what could possibly happen to you?" It still happens. But if we consider someone who has to go home really late in Tijuana, specifically thinking about this transfronteriza community, these women that have to go home to places that are not very secure, consider them and what time they're going to get home? It's these little things that make a difference because, me being on the street at 9 pm *en el centro de Tijuana* [translation: in downtown Tijuana], is putting me at risk, and it's a risk that I'd be willing to go through to go to school, to have an education. It's unfair, it's not San Diego State's fault, but San Diego State could take it into consideration.

The intersectionalities that Transfronterizas faced between navigating the realities of femicide in Mexico and at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, and navigating their transborder commutes for their education in the U.S., were some of the most pressing concerns they discussed. Perla's advice to campus leaders in San Diego on this issue was to be aware of the realities of femicide along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and how these realities affect the Transfronteriza student populations in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Perla further advises university officials to implement courses that are offered early in the day for the safety of their Transfronteriza student population. For example, she explained that in her situation as a current master's student, some of her classes are only offered in the evenings and are ending at night, and how there are many times when she puts her safety in jeopardy in order to attend her evening classes. After attending

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her late classes, she's having to navigate the transborder commute and the city of Tijuana late at night.

Sexual Orientation

Luis was the only Transfronterizx student who discussed the intersections of his transborder identity and sexual orientation identity for this dissertation study. He provided this information during a photovoice focus group and a photovoice one-on-one interview. This is not to say that Luis was the only Transfronterizx student in this study who identified as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) community, however, he was the only participant in this study who discussed his sexual orientation identity. Specifically, Luis identified as a Queer, Transborder Person of Color and Mexican.

" My Queer Identity Informs My Transborder Identity." Luis' sexual orientation identity was integral to the meaning making of his transborder identity in relationship to himself and others at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. As a result, Luis provided extensive and profound insights into understanding what it means to be a Queer, Transborder Person of Color to him. During a photovoice focus group at TSAP, Luis provided the following reflection and photograph in *figure 53* to illustrate the meaning of his Queer, Transborder identity:

Being transborder does inform my queer identity and my queer identity informs my transborder identity. Being transborder allows me to experience firsthand the differences of being queer in different parts of the world. It allows me to understand that attitudes and beliefs about queer people are socially constructed and vary according to geographical location. Being a transborder queer allows me to be sensitive to the realities that being queer in other places might not look the same and also allows me to appreciate the importance of individual experience. It allows me to understand that we all

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experience the world differently, yet we are connected through these experiences and the flow of ideas. Being transborder has given me a sense of global citizenship responsibility in uplifting not just those in my community but those around the world. For they also form, shape and influence my community, a community without boundaries.



Figure 53. Photovoice focus group at TSAP, photo by Luis Chavez Rodriguez. “Being a transborder queer allows me to be sensitive to the realities that being queer in other places might not look the same and also allows me to appreciate the importance of individual experience.”

Luis provides a lens to understanding how his sexual orientation identity informs the development of his transborder identity, and how his queer identity is not mutually exclusive, but is also informed by his transborder identity. In his reflection, Luis addresses the critical consciousness of his environment, sense of global citizenship, and empathy and solidarity with marginalized communities as key concepts of his Queer, transborder identity. Like Transfronterix students who used photographs illustrating the juxtaposition of nature and the border to convey the concept of how “Borders Are Not Natural,” Luis used his photograph in

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figure 50, to make the parallels between how borders are not natural but, instead, man-made, just like socially constructed isms, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. Luis's reflection and photograph also further inform the findings, "Borders Are Man Made Just Like Racism." During a photovoice one-on-one interview, Luis further explored what it means to navigate the U.S.-Mexico international border and the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands as a Queer, Transborder Person of Color.

"There is Homophobia in Both Worlds." Luis reflected on several concepts about his Queer Transborder Identity; the most critical was the realities of homophobia in both the U.S. and Mexico. Luis explained, "I think one of the biggest injustices is not being able to be yourself in your own home." Specifically, Luis discussed how homophobia exists in both nations and also addressed that "Mexico is the second country in the world with the most homophobic assaults." Particularly, Luis explained the harsh realities of homophobia in Mexico:

You can't express yourself; you can't show public affection in public spaces. You get kicked out actually. You get warnings and then you get kicked out of the like clubs and stuff. And so yeah, definitely, there isn't that space to be who you are in Mexico.

Luis also addressed that the LGBTQI migrant community faces homophobia at the border. Luis did not discuss specific incidents of homophobia that he faced at the border. However, during a different photovoice one-on-one interview, Leonardo recalled the unfortunate, homophobic hate speech that was perpetuated upon him and his brother by a U.S. Customs agent when crossing the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. Leonardo recalled:

Yo me acuerdo cuando estaba chico. When I was a little kid, una vez me acuerdo que mi hermano, yo tenía a piece of lint in my hair, mi hermano me lo quitó y un Border Patrol Agent se paró y dijo, "What are you two guys, lovers?" Así dijo. Empezó a decir, "Are

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you guys faggots?" He was yelling that. ¿Te acuerdas que antes cruzabas y ponías tu mochila en el escáner? Through that, he was yelling at us. Una señora le dijo, "Hey, stop!" And this was a Border Patrol Agent, and he was yelling at us for that. He got super insecure that my brother took a piece of lint off my hair. Luego mi hermano le dijo, "No, we're brothers, what's wrong with you?"

[Translation: I remember when I was little. When I was a little kid, I once remembered that my brother, I had a piece of lint in my hair, my brother took it off me, and a Border Patrol Agent stood up and said, "What are you two guys, lovers?" So, he said. He started to say, "Are you faggots?" He was yelling that. Do you remember when you used to cross before, you would put your backpack in the scanner? Through that he was yelling at us. A lady said, "Hey, stop!" And this was a Border Patrol Agent, and he was yelling at us for that. He got super insecure that my brother took a piece of lint off my hair. Then my brother said, "No, we're brothers, what's wrong with you?"]

Leonardo is not part of the LGBTQI community; however, his reflection addresses the disturbing realities of homophobia at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. Another, disturbing fact about Leonardo's reflection is that this happened when he was a child crossing the border, revealing the culture of impunity at the U.S.-Mexico international border system, where U.S. Customs agents use their power to abuse, and they have no respect for the humanity of people and children crossing the border.

Summary

The terms *Transborder Identity* and the *Intersections of a Transborder Identity* in this photovoice constructivist grounded theory dissertation study were generated to define and conceptualize how Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education ascribe

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meanings to themselves and others in relationship to their social identities, academic trajectories and transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. However, illustrated in chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation study, Transfronterizx students culturally and ethnically self-identify with various social identities not limited only to “Transborder” or “Transfronterizx,” such as “Transfronteriza,” “Transfronterizo,” “Queer Transborder Person of Color,” “Mexican-American,” “Latinx,” “Mexican” and “American.” For example, Isaac, who has lived a transborder life since he was a child, identified as a Mexican-American who lives a transborder life, and defines his identity not as “Transborder” or “Transfronterizx” but as a hybrid of both his “American” and “Mexican” cultures at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

I want to emphasize that even if students live a transborder life and cross the border daily at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, it is important to get to know the students first and learn how they identity. Moreover, the complexities of a transborder identity development among Transfronterizx students are beyond the in-vivo themes presented in this dissertation study. Additionally, Transfronterizx students conceptualize, contemplate and reflect on the realities of their transborder lives and social identities beyond the oppressions they face at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. For example, Josemar provided insights into understanding how meaning making about life at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands looked like for a Transfronterizo in Japan:

This photograph, I chose outside of the region, and I just kind of wanted to make the statement that there's also this other world beyond being transborder where you do take your identity... We are not a community that exists out of violence, that exists out of oppression. We are not that. We are constantly being told that's who we are, that we are

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survivors. Yes, we are. But then we exist out of oppression? No, we don't; we also exist in beautiful spaces. It's kind of what I wanted to show with that photograph.



Figure 54. Photovoice one-on-one interview, photo by Josemar Gonzalez Lizarraga. “We also exist in beautiful spaces.”

In *figure 54*, Josemar contemplated about his identity beyond the region and oppression he has faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Indeed, “we also exist in beautiful spaces.” In this study, the beauty of Transfronterizx students was illustrated through their love, connection and sense of belonging to San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, and their compassion, understanding, empathy and solidarity with their community and marginalized communities in both regions through civic leadership and activism at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Research, Practice and Policy for Fostering the Development, Learning and Success of Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education

Transfronterizx students are an immense asset to the prosperity and future of the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands for their skills, knowledge, understanding about the region and dedication to serve as a bridge between both nations by civic leadership and activism with their community and marginalized communities in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. In their efforts to lead transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, they face multiple oppressions that directly hinder their development, academic success and leadership as Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education. As a result, it is paramount to implement research, practices and policies in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region, to foster the development, learning and success of this student population, for the holistic prosperity of both Transfronterizx students and the overall San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Implications for research, practice and policy are needed in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. Nevertheless, the scope of this study was focused on Transfronterizx students attending postsecondary and higher education institutions in San Diego, CA. As a result, I will address implications for research, policy and practice for postsecondary and higher education institutions located in San Diego, CA; and I recommend that similar efforts be implemented in higher education institutions in Tijuana, Baja California.

Summary of the Study

The primary goal of student affairs educators is to provide a developmental environment for students in higher education institutions (McEwen, 2003). The understanding of “who the college student is in developmental terms” (Knefelkamp et al., 1978) is a significant component of the conceptual understanding of student development. Centering this dissertation study on

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exploring the identity development of Transfronterizx college students was intentional, for the significance of creating an understanding about their lived experiences, challenges, strengths and resiliencies for student affairs educators in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to learn how they can foster the learning, development, leadership and success of this student population that forms part of their campus communities. As a result, the purpose and research questions guiding this dissertation study were the following:

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this photovoice constructivist grounded theory study was to illustrate the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities. To generate the findings of this study, I conducted 11 photovoice focus groups and 20 one-on-one photovoice interviews in three grounded theory data collection and analysis phases, consisting of 691 photos with 32 current and former Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

Photovoice (Hall & Bowen, 2015) and visual methodologies (Hailey, Miller, & Yenawine, 2015; Serafini, 2010) were instrumental to exploring the profound meaning makings Transfronterizx students ascribed to their transborder identity in relationship to their social identities, themselves and others at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Due to recent advances in technology, social scientists argue that visual mediums, such as video and photography, are central to the representation of culture (Rose, 2016). Photography was part of the day-to-day engagement in the lives of Transfronterizx students through the use of their smart phones and

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social media, and their participation in BorderClick and the Transborder Student Ally Program. As a result, for Transfronterizx students, reflecting upon their photographs through photovoice for this dissertation study was a relevant form of discussion.

The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity were illustrated in a model that is grounded by the thoughts, feelings, and experiences participants shared about their academic trajectories, transborder performances and salient social identities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Applying grounded theory data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014) with photovoice (Hall & Bowen, 2015) and visual methodologies (Hailey, Miller, & Yenawine, 2015; Serafini, 2010) was paramount to generating findings to illustrate Transfronterizx students' intersectionalities and developmental processes of their transborder identity. As a result, I applied a photovoice grounded theory methodological design guided in three phases: phase 1-initial/ open data collection and analysis; phase 2-focused data collection and analysis; and phase 3-axial data collection and analysis. Each phase consisted of a constant comparative of the themes, sub-themes, in-vivo codes and photographs. Additionally, I also applied visual methodologies in each phase, consisting of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Hailey, Miller, & Yenawine, 2015) and perceptual, structural and ideological analysis (Serafini, 2010). The findings of the photovoice constructivist grounded theory model of this dissertation study was guided by the following overarching research question and sub-questions:

Guiding Research Question: What are the Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity? To examine the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity, the overarching research question of this dissertation study was guided by the following five sub-research questions:

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Sub-RQ1: How do Transfronterizx students ascribe meaning to their Transborder Identity? *Transborder Identity* was defined by the thoughts, feelings, experiences and performances that Transfronterizx students shared through images and dialogue about their academic trajectories and transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Transborder identity was defined by five in-vivo themes representing the meanings Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education ascribed to themselves in relationship to others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands: (1) “We Speak English, We Speak Spanish, We Speak Spanglish,” (2) “Soy De Aquí y Soy de Allá/ Ni Soy De Aquí, Ni Soy De Allá,” (3) “Building Bridges, Not Walls,” (4) “We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations” and (5) “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante.” These in-vivo themes represented Transfronterizx students’ bilingual skills, sense of belonging, unity, solidarity, adaptability, resilience and resistance in leading their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

“We Speak English, We Speak Spanish, We Speak Spanglish,” “Soy De Aquí y Soy De Allá/ Ni Soy De Aquí, Ni Soy De Allá,” and “Building Bridges, Not Walls,” revealed Transfronterizx students’ bilingual skills in English and Spanish and sense of belonging to both nations through civic leadership and activism. Transfronterizx students’ bilingual proficiencies in English and Spanish were instrumental skills to establishing a sense of belonging in both nations, by having the linguistic abilities to establish personal ties and engage in civic leadership in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California. “*Soy De Aquí Y Soy De Allá*” was a phrase that Transfronterizx students discussed to express their deep ties, connections and sense of belonging to both San Diego and Tijuana and the greater U.S. and Mexico. Transfronterizx students used phrases like “connection” and “love” to express their sense of belonging to both regions and

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translated their sentiments to performances of social justice in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja, CA, represented in the in-vivo theme “Building Bridges, Not Walls.”

“We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations” and “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante,” hand-in-hand, revealed Transfronterizx students’ “grit,” “tenacity,” “resilience” and “resistencia” in facing challenges during their transborder lives and academic trajectories. “We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations” and “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” were also integral concepts Transfronterizx students used to ascribe meaning to their transborder identity. “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” [Translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] was often discussed by Transfronterizx students in reference to the resilience crucial to adapting to the harsh environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border, the tenacity fundamental to enduring the transborder commute, the grit required to succeeding academically and the “resistencia” [translation: resistance] necessary to enduring the sociopolitical obstacles they and their families faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Sub-RQ2: What are the psychosocial and cognitive structural processes of a transborder identity? Transfronterizx students’ psychosocial developmental processes were described by the meanings they ascribed to their transborder identity in relation to themselves, others and their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Cognitive structural developmental processes were described by Transfronterizx students’ thinking processes and shifts in reasoning about their psychosocial experiences and performances. As a result, each in-vivo thematic code defining transborder identity exhibited two components: (1) thoughts, ideas and thinking patters [cognitive-structural], and (2) performances, experiences and feelings [psychosocial], in relevance to Transfronterizx students’ transborder lives and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

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For example, the in-vivo theme “Lo Que Pasa Es Que Piensas En Los Dos Idiomas” [Translation: What Happens Is That You Think in Both Languages] exhibited transfronterizx students’ cognitive-structural processes of translanguaging and performances of codeswitching in English, Spanish and Spanglish in their environments at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Similarly, the in-vivo theme “Borders Are Not Natural” provided a lens to understanding how Transfronterizx students began to conceptualize what “Building Bridges, Not Walls” meant to them, by first describing how “borders are not natural” through photographs that exhibited the contrast between “nature” and the “border wall.” Thus, informing Transfronterizx students’ performances to serve as a bridge between both nations through civic leadership and activism in Tijuana, Baja California; San Diego, CA, and at the U.S.-Mexico international border. Another important example of transfronterizx students’ cognitive-structural and psychosocial processes are the in-vivo themes “I Get to the Border and it's a Known Habitat” and “BorderHacks,” that illustrated their thorough and complex understandings of the social, political and cultural contexts in the U.S. and Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico international border and their performances to adapt to some of the most pressing challenges they faced in their transborder environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Sub-RQ3: What are the social identity intersections of a transborder identity?

Transfronterizx students identified the following seven social identities as salient to their transborder identity development: (1) *First-Generation College Student*, (2) *Social Economic Status*, (3) *Mix-Status Families*, (4) *Foster Youth*, (5) *Race & Ethnicity*, (6) *Gender* and (7) *Sexual Orientation*. Some of the most critical experiences that Transfronterizx students reported were relating to the intersections between their social identities, transborder lives and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Most Transfronterizx students who

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participated in this study were first-generation college students. Some were not only the first in their families pursuing higher education but also the first in their families to attend an education system in the U.S. The initial reasons that lead Transfronterizx students to live transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands varied, yet some of the most critical were housing insecurities and forming part of mix-immigration status families living at the borderlands to stay together.

Transfronterizx students' most critical intersections of their social identities and transborder lives were illustrated through transgressions of microaggressions, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia and violence that they faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students reported facing racism, sexism, homophobia and violence at the U.S.-Mexico international border. The multiple oppressions transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were extensively discussed when addressing the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and their transborder lives. Throughout their academic trajectories in the U.S., from K-12 and in postsecondary and higher education, they reported facing a lack of understanding, microaggressions, discrimination and racism perpetuated by teachers, faculty, advisors and students. Due to the multiple oppressions transfronterizx students faced, they reported physical and psychological stressors that significantly hindered their wellbeing and academic success.

The intersectionalities of social economic status and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis exposed that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, challenges for Transfronterizx students have only compounded. Many take online classes to protect their health, yet, as working-class, college students are at the forefront of the pandemic, working in food and delivery service jobs. Additionally, crossing one of the world's busiest borders adds to the health hazards they face,

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where social distancing guidelines are not implemented. Moreover, Transfronterizx students discussed physical and psychological stressors that they faced crossing the San Ysidro International Pedestrian Port of Entry during COVID-19.

Additionally, within the intersections of COVID-19, online instruction and racism, Nanitzia reported how higher education campus communities are not safe from the oppression of White supremacy online, as she discussed her frustration to White supremacist students invading an online zoom meeting by her university intended as a safe space of dialogue online for Black students and Black faculty, centering on discussions on Black Lives Matter issues. Nanitzia is not Black nor Afro-Latina, however, she expressed how the White supremacy and racism against the Black campus community in her university raised her vigilance to the fact that if universities can't control racism online, she can't even imagine what in-person instruction will be like in light of the nation's and universities' current lack of safety against White supremacy and racism. Overall, Nanitzia's accounts shed light to the White supremacy, racism and discrimination perpetuated in higher education institutions' online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, creating an un-safe and oppressive campus climate for all students of color.

Sub-RQ4: How do Transfronterizx students' psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes about their transborder identity development influenced their social identities?

Transfronterizx students' psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes about their transborder identity informed the development of their social identities, and jointly their social identities informed the development of their transborder identity. These findings were illustrated by in-vivo themes informing the seven social identities that transfronterizx students identified as salient to their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. For example, "Borders Are Man Made Just Like Racism" was informed by the transgressions that transfronterizx

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students faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, that ranged from microaggressions, racism and sexism, to violence at the U.S.-Mexico international border. Another in-vivo theme example is "Muchas Veces Me Tengo Que Aguantar El Acoso De Los Oficiales" [Translation: "Many times I have to Put-Up with Sexual Harassment from Officials."] that exposed the intersectionalities of gender and the transborder lives of Transfronterizas who faced oppressions at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. The type of oppression they reported the most was sexual harassment by U.S. Customs agents. That negatively impacted their transborder identity development, psychological wellbeing and academic success.

Sub-RQ5: What are the developmental skills, knowledge, understandings, practices and thinking patterns Transfronterizx students acquire through time? Development was described through the skills, knowledge, understandings, shifts in reasonings and performances that Transfronterizx students acquired through the time they spent in their transborder lives and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students' transborder lives exhibited their development and performances of: bilingual skills in English and Spanish; sense of belonging to both nations through civic leadership and activism; and adaptability and resiliencies to challenges they faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Development was an interwoven finding illustrated through the thematic in-vivo codes that defined Transfronterizx students' meaning making of their transborder identity and the intersectionalities of their social identities and transborder lives.

The findings illustrating transborder identity development were interwoven in the in-vivo codes defining Transfronterizx students' meaning makings of themselves in relationship to others and their environment in their efforts to lead transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. For example, "We Speak English, We Speak Spanish, We Speak Spanglish"

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exhibited Transfronterizx students' discussions about their journeys in developing proficient bilingual skills in English and Spanish with time in their transborder lives, and how initially they faced growing pains and struggles relating to acquiring confidence and skills to get to where they were at in their language proficiency in Spanish and English.

Similarly, Transfronterizx students portrayed developing a positive sense of belonging to both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, with time living a transborder life at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Developmentally, they expressed two overarching sentiments to illustrate how they perceived their sense of belonging, themselves and others in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico: "*Soy De Aqui, Y Soy De Allá*" [Translation: I am From Here, and I am From There] and "*Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá*" [Translation: I am Not from Here, Nor I am From There]. Several Transfronterizx students shared how they were from both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana and expressed that in the beginning of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, they felt like they didn't belong anywhere. Particularly, younger of age participants, who were also in their initial year as Transfronterizx students, shared feeling like they didn't belong anywhere. On the other hand, older Transfronterizx students that had established living a transborder life for several years shared having a sense of belonging to both, San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Mexico. Most Transfronterizx students shared that during the beginning of their transborder lives and academic trajectories, they felt like they didn't belong anywhere and echoed the phrase and sentiment: "*Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá*" [translation: I am Neither from Here, nor am I from There]. This sentiment also followed feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. The findings exhibited Transfronterizx students' shifts in reasonings that supported them in transitioning from thinking and feeling like they didn't belong anywhere to

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establishing a positive sense of self and belonging to their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

“We have to adapt to live in these situations” is a thematic in-vivo code that portrayed how Transfronterizx students developed skills, knowledge, understandings and performances during their transborder interactions and academic trajectories at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students described the skills, knowledge, understandings and performances that they developed during their transborder interactions and academic trajectories as necessary in adapting to challenges they faced in their San Diego-Tijuana transborder environment. Transfronterizx students’ transborder environment was described as San Diego, CA; Tijuana, Baja California; the greater U.S., Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico international border. Overall, their environment at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and U.S.-Mexico international border was described as a harsh place to “grow” in. Hand-in-hand with adaptability, “Las Ganas de Salir Adelante” [translation: The Drive to Get Ahead] depicted transfronterizx students’ shifts in reasoning to acquire the courage to be resilient in adapting to the harsh environment at the U.S.-Mexico international border.

As mentioned in the Sub-RQ4, Transfronterizx students’ transborder identity informed the development of their social identities, and jointly their social identities informed the development of their transborder identity. The transgressions of microaggression, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia and violence that Transfronterizx students faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands had a negative impact in the development of their transborder identity and social identities. Transfronterizx students’ internal and external factors that had a positive influence in their transborder identity development in postsecondary and higher education were on-campus and off-campus organizations focused on validating their transborder identity,

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transborder student allies, and their “Ganas de Salir Adelante” [translation: Drive to Get Ahead] through their grit and dedication towards their academic success. Particularly, the organizations BorderClick, TASO, and TSAP supported Transfronterizx students to establish a positive sense of belonging on-campus and were significantly important for first-generation Transfronterizx college students in navigating the community college and higher education systems in relevance to their transborder lives. Transborder student allies were also of great support for first-generation Transfronterizx college students to establish a positive transborder identity development through advocacy and support when facing discrimination on campus.

Transfronterizx students’ “Ganas de Salir Adelante” [translation: Drive to Get Ahead] was an internal drive to overcome various challenges they faced at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and grit to succeed in their academics. In spite of Transfronterizx students’ resilience to adapt to the challenges they faced and grit towards their academic success, they still faced physical and psychological stressors that were detrimental to their wholistic wellbeing.

Discussion of Relevant Literature

The findings of this dissertation study build on previous literature focused on Transfronterizx students in high school, postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Cueva Esquivel, 2018; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018; Falcón Orta, et al., 2018; Falcón Orta & Monk, 2020; Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016). The findings of this dissertation study build on previous literature focused on high school Transfronterizx students’ code switching and translanguaging skills (Zentella, 2007; Zentella, 2016) and the transborder capital and intelligence (Chávez Montaña, 2006; Cueva Esquivel, 2018) that Transfronterizx college students and high school students acquire in their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Few studies on Transfronterizx college students have

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explored their transborder identity formation processes (Falcon, 2013; Falcón Orta & Orta Falcón, 2018), and fewer studies have examined the intersections of their transborder identity and gender (Falcón Orta, et al., 2018). The findings of this dissertation study narrows the gap of literature by illustrating the intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity among Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region by examining the psychosocial and cognitive-structural factors that influenced their social identities.

Psychosocial and Cognitive-Structural Developmental Process

Scholars focusing on the development of students in college address the significance of understanding “who the college student is in developmental terms; how development occurs; how the college environment can influence student development; and towards what ends development in college should be directed” (Knefelkamp et al., 1978; p.x). Psychosocial developmental processes address what students are concerned about, and cognitive-structural developmental processes address how students think about the issues they face in college life. Psychosocial and cognitive-structural processes provide a lens to understanding Transfronterizx students’ transborder identity development. However, to critically address Transfronterizx students’ transborder identity development, it is crucial to study the intersectionalities of their social identities in relationship to themselves and others in their environments at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality suggests that identification with multiple social categories (e.g. race, class, sexual orientation, etc.) is not mutually exclusive, and these identities concurrently interact in a variety of ways (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality framework also

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attends to prevailing socio-structural and power influences among groups (e.g. race or gender) and examines identities in the context of current climate (Hankivsky, 2012; Shields, 2008).

Intersectionality was instrumental to providing an analytical lens to examining how Transfronterizx students' social identities influenced their transborder identity development, and jointly exploring the meaning makings of their transborder identity was salient to understanding the development of their social identities. Applying an intersectionality framework to this study provided a lens to understanding some of the most critical challenges Transfronterizx students experienced and the multiple oppressions they faced both on-campus and off-campus.

Funds of Knowledge, Community Cultural Wealth and Transborder Capital

The concepts of transborder capital (Chávez Montaña, 2006) and transborder intelligence (Cueva Esquivel, 2018) build on foundational literature that addresses the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge that students of color bring to their education settings (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Chávez Montaña's (2006) contribution to exploring transborder capital is focused on addressing the cultural capital of Transfronterizx college students accumulated through their transborder lifestyle. Cueva Esquivel (2018) further builds on the concept of transborder capital by exploring transborder intelligence through findings that revealed Transfronterizx young adults' high school trajectories' unique knowledge and skills that allowed them to successfully navigate their border environments. The findings of this dissertation study further build on the concepts of transborder capital and transborder intelligence through the themes "We Have to Adapt to Live in these Situations" and "BorderHacks." Similar to the foundational literature focused on addressing the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge that students of color bring to their education settings (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Yosso, 2005), it is important to address the transborder capital and transborder intelligence

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that Transfronterizx students bring to universities and community colleges at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and their dispositions to serve as bridges between both nations through civic leadership. Overall, to create enriching leadership and academic opportunities for Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education, it is important to validate the capital that they already bring from their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Implications for Policy and Practice

It is paramount to address the social justice, equity and inclusion of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands by implementing policies and practices centered on fostering their development, learning and success. Specifically in San Diego, CA, where Transfronterizx students form part of the student populations in community colleges and universities in the region, there is a lack of policies, programs and initiatives centered on their transborder identity and the intersectionalities between their social identities and transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. As a result, I recommend top-down leadership efforts focused on policy, funding and long-lasting initiatives centered on supporting and building on the grassroots leadership efforts of the Transfronterizx community at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Implications for Policies

The lack of policy in education centered on the social justice and equity of Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands is a rooted problem to creating an inclusive and validating campus environment for this student population. Specifically, public higher education residency policy in California (Cal. EDC § 68062, 1976) requires students to have one primary residency in California to be considered in-state residents. Detrimentally, this policy is not inclusive of the sociopolitical inequities and cultural realities of Transfronterizx

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students in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Therefore, I will draw from policy in K-12 public education in California to provide recommendations for policy in postsecondary and higher public education centered on the social justice and equity of Transfronterizx students at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands by addressing the critical societal challenges this student population faces.

The reasons why Transfronterizx students began transborder lives varied, however, the two most critical were: (1) facing displacement in the U.S. due to economic hardships and housing insecurities; and (2) facing family deportation and living at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to stay together. The Transfronterizx students who participated in this study were U.S. citizens and crossed the U.S.-Mexico international border daily to continue their studies in the U.S. The beginnings of their transborder lives and academic trajectories also varied from K-12 to community college, undergraduate and graduate studies. Evidently, implications for policy addressing the social justice of Transfronterizx students are necessary throughout the entire education pipeline, K-12, postsecondary and higher education, at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

In 2017, the Senate Bill No. 257 (2017) was approved by the Governor of California, allowing children in K-12 public education to continue their schooling in California if their parent(s) were deported. Thus, public education policy for K-12 (Cal. EDC § 48204.4, 2017) allows Transfronterizx youth who faced displacement in California due to family deportation, living in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to stay together, to continue their studies in San Diego, CA, in compliance with residency requirements to attend school. I recommend that the public education policy for K-12 (Cal. EDC § 48204.4, 2017) also include language that addresses the social inequities of facing displacement in California due to economic challenges

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and housing insecurities, in addition to the sociopolitical challenges of facing family deportation. Thus, addressing the sociopolitical and economic inequities that are some of the most critical to Transfronterizx students in K-12 public education in California at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

As exhibited in the findings of this dissertation study, Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education also face the sociopolitical challenges of family deportation and economic inequities of housing insecurities in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. In addition to my recommendations to the public education policy for K-12 (Cal. EDC § 48204.4, 2017), I recommend that public higher education residency policy in California (Cal. EDC § 68062, 1976) also include language to address the sociopolitical challenges of family deportation and economic inequities of housing insecurities that Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education in San Diego, CA, are currently facing at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Implications for Practice

In the implications for practice towards fostering the success of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education, I recommend that campus leaders at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands support and build on the grassroots, student-led change initiatives that the Transfronterizx community have established over the last five years. The BorderClick program, established in 2016; The Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization, established in 2017; and the Transborder Student Ally Program, established in 2018, are some of the few programs and organizations that exist in the region, centered on validating and creating spaces of inclusion for Transfronterizx students in high school, postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Yet, these are grassroots, student-led organizations, implemented on a

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volunteer basis by the Transfronterizx community for Transfronterizx students, with much need of support. As a result, in the efforts to implement practices centered on fostering the success of Transfronterizx students, I recommend that student affairs educators and campus officials support and follow the leadership of these organizations that are at the forefront of implementing social justice efforts for Transfronterizx students. Overall, the findings of this dissertation study call for implications for practice centered on addressing the campus climate, basic needs, and academic success and leadership of the Transfronterizx student population in postsecondary and higher education at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands.

Campus Climate. Campus climate is defined by Hurtado et al. (1999) as college students' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and actions about matters centered on diversity in their campus communities. An inclusive campus climate is perceived by college students who establish a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and validation (Rendon, Garcia and Person, 2004) to their campus community. Strayhorn (2012, p.3) defines sense of belonging as a college student's "perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared for, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus". An inclusive campus climate is instrumental for the development, learning and academic success of students of color in postsecondary and higher education.

The findings of this dissertation study shed light on Transfronterizx students' encounters in postsecondary and higher education that both created an inclusive campus climate and a hostile campus climate in their community colleges and universities. The in-vivo themes "Ni Soy de Aqui, Ni Soy De Allá" [translation: I am Not from Here, Nor I am From There] and "Racismo en la Escuela" [Translation: Racism at School] portrayed Transfronterizx students' negative experiences that went from feeling "lonely" and "invisible" on-campus, to accounts of facing

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discrimination, racism and White supremacy perpetuated by peers and faculty, that contributed to a hostile campus climate. On the contrary, the in-vivo themes "It Wasn't Until I Found TASO, that I Felt Like I Belonged On-Campus" and "Transborder Student Allies Really Made a Difference" exhibited Transfronterizx students' reflections and photographs of an inclusive campus climate. "It Wasn't Until I Found TASO, that I Felt Like I Belonged On-Campus" was informed by Transfronterizx students' discussions about the BorderClick, TASO and TSAP programs and organizations that validated and created spaces of inclusion centered on their experiences as Transfronterizx students. "Transborder Student Allies Really Made a Difference" was illustrated through Transfronterizx students photographs and discussion about allies who were open to learning about their transborder lives, supported them in navigating postsecondary and higher education, and advocated for them in light of discrimination. The factors that contributed to a hostile campus climate for Transfronterizx students, as well as those that contributed to an inclusive campus environment, both need to be addressed to implement practices for a campus environment centered on the development, learning and success of the Transfronterizx student population.

Firstly, no student should have to face discrimination, racism and White supremacy in their spaces of learning. These transgressions not only create a hostile environment for Transfronterizx students but also create an un-safe campus environment for all students of color. Therefore, top-down leadership efforts need to focus on stricter hiring guidelines that thoroughly assess potential student affairs educator's and faculty's dispositions, commitments and behaviors centered on the inclusion, equity and social justice of students of color. Additionally, stricter campus climate assessments need to be implemented, and student affairs educators and faculty need to be assessed for teaching and campus involvement centered on the inclusion, equity and

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social justice of students of color. Regardless of tenure, student affairs educators and faculty with multiple student evolutions that demonstrate accounts of microaggressions, or discrimination need to be dismissed from community colleges and universities.

Secondly, the representation and visibility of issues relevant to the Transfronterizx student experience is important, especially in universities and community colleges along the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Currently, it's the Transfronterizx student community that is focusing on creating spaces of inclusion and validation for Transfronterizx students through safe spaces of dialogue, multimedia storytelling and by providing cultural competency trainings about the Transfronterizx student experience to faculty, staff and students in the region. These efforts are immense strides towards creating changes for an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterizx students, however, these efforts are on a volunteer basis by the Transfronterizx community and are in need of support. Therefore, top-down leadership efforts, such as funding and long-lasting initiatives to support the leadership and efforts of the Transfronterizx community are necessary to creating an inclusive campus environment for the Transfronterizx student community. Specifically, creating programs and initiatives centered on the inclusion, validation and basic needs of the Transfronterizx student community need to be included in the strategic plans of community colleges and universities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Furthermore, these strategic plans need to be translated into actionable steps that demonstrate the inclusion, validation, and basic need of the Transfronterizx student community, through funding and long-lasting initiatives centered on the learning, development and success of the Transfronterizx student population. Evident in the findings, spaces of validation and inclusion significantly inform an inclusive campus climate for Transfronterizx students, and these efforts

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need to be supported to ameliorate the factors that contribute to a hostile campus climate that many students in this dissertation discussed facing.

Basic Needs. Addressing the basic needs of Transfronterizx students is foundational to creating an inclusive campus environment for this student population in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Many of Transfronterizx students' basic needs are those that students of color are also faced with, however, without addressing the intersectionalities between their transborder lives, social identities and academic experiences, their basic needs go unnoticed and unmet in postsecondary and higher education institutions. As a result, firstly it is important for community colleges and universities to be aware of and knowledgeable of the Transfronterizx students' experience in order to address how they can support their basic needs through resources that are already available on-campus. The basic needs Transfronterizx students discussed in this dissertation study are the following:

Food and Housing Insecurities: "Focusing on School Was Hard, Because I Didn't Have a Home Where I Could Do My Homework." As mentioned in this chapter, some of the most critical reasons that led Transfronterizx students to live transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were housing insecurities in San Diego and the greater California. Participants of this study described facing displacement and seeking refuge in more affordable housing opportunities at Tijuana, Baja California. Another reason that forced Transfronterizx students to acquire this lifestyle was because they formed part of mix-immigration families that faced the deportation of a family member and were living in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to stay together. Transfronterizx students' economic disparities were also prevalent during their academic trajectories in postsecondary and higher education, facing food and housing insecurities in their day-to-day college lives. Programs already in place that support college

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students who are facing food and housing insecurities could significantly support Transfronterizx students' most basic needs of food and shelter. As illustrated in these findings, access to food was also difficult, and students were also faced with spending their days and nights in unstable living arrangements, like in their cars and public spaces, while navigating their transborder commutes, that for several Transfronterizx students would start as early as 1:30 and 4:00 AM and would end as late as 12:00 AM.

Mix-Immigration Status Families: "Graduating Meant that My Parents Weren't Going to Be There." Graduation is a significant milestone for many first-generation students of color in the U.S. Particularly in community colleges and universities, student affairs educators are mindful of celebrating graduates' salient social identities with commencements for LGBTQI, Latinx, Black, Native American and Asian Americans and Pacific Islander students. For Transfronterizx students who form part of mix-immigration status families, graduation is an emotionally painful event that they cannot share with loved ones who do not have the privilege to cross the U.S.-Mexico international port of entry. As a result, I recommend that student affairs educators in San Diego, CA, partner with education leaders in Tijuana, Baja California, to create commencement opportunities that Transfronterizx students can participate in and celebrate with their loved ones who do not have the privilege of crossing the U.S.-Mexico international port of entry.

Foster Youth: "They Shouldn't Assume that Everyone Has Parents." Foster youth are often overlooked in postsecondary and higher education (Salazar, et al., 2016). Particularly, the assumption of family privilege (Seita, 2001) by campus leaders hinders foster youth's access to resources and their inclusion, making their lived experiences as foster youth invisible during college life. The realities of being part of the foster care systems in the U.S. becomes even more

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complicated when living between the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Transfronterizx students who formed part of mix-immigration status families were often placed in this system due to family separation by ICE. However, the realities of foster youth are not limited to Transfronterizx students of mix-immigration status families, as made evident in Leonardo's story. For Leonardo, due to the assumption of family privilege and the lack of communication between educators in San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, he was not able to access basics needed for his overall wellbeing and academic success as a foster youth. Firstly, the knowledge and awareness of the resiliencies and challenges of the foster youth student community is important for educators overall to assess the basic needs and inclusion of this student population. Secondly, for educators working towards advancing the success of foster youth at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, communication with educators in Tijuana, Baja California is necessary to address the needs and inclusion of Transfronterizx foster youth in K-12, and postsecondary and higher education.

Economic Disparities and Safety Issues During COVID-19: "Just Because We Are Taking Online Classes Doesn't Mean that We Don't Have to Cross the Border During COVID-19." The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the challenges of college students of color in the U.S., who are also working-class facing health hazard issues in the service sector, like grocery stores and delivery services, in addition to balancing their academic responsibilities online. This was also the reality for Transfronterizxs in this study, that consisted mostly of working-class students of color. They were first-generation Transfronterizx students in the community college, who were all working in the service sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, crossing the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry added to the challenges they faced, with more security and scrutiny increasing border wait times and lack of social distancing

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guidelines. Due to these challenges, information about scholarships and work study can go a long way for first-generation Transfronterizx community college students, especially when they are just beginning to learn how to navigate the community college and higher education systems, and they might not initially be aware of this information.

Safety and Safe Spaces for Dialogue: "Borders Are Man Made Just Like Racism." The multiple oppressions transfronterizx students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border and at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands were most evidently discussed when addressing the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and their transborder lives. Transfronterizx students discussed facing discrimination, racism, sexism and homophobia perpetuated by U.S. Customs agents at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. Additionally, they discussed prevalent issues in both nations, such as Transfronterizo students being profiled by police on both sides of the border, Transfronteriza students concerns of safety issues due to femicide along the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and the greater Mexico, and homophobia on both sides of the border and at the U.S.-Mexico International Port of Entry. These discussions were followed by instances when Transfronterizx students recalled having issues of anxiety, fear and depression due to these traumatic encounters.

Firstly, safe spaces of dialogue are paramount for Transfronterizx students to discuss the realities they face in light of the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and their transborder lives at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. In addition, these safe spaces of dialogue need to be equipped with trained student affairs educators with the understanding of both the Transfronterizx student population and psychological support services in their campus community and the greater San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Secondly, Transfronterizx students' safety issues also need to be considered, and their recommendations for safety initiatives should

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be implemented. For example, Dennis recommended communication between campus leaders on both sides of the border with U.S. Customs and Mexican police, about the facts that there are both transborder classes and Transfronterizx students attending these classes between universities in Tijuana, Baja California, and San Diego, CA; with the hopes that with this information Transfronterizo students will be profiled less by police on both sides of the border. Additionally, Perla advised universities to offer classes that are only available before the evenings in order for Transfronteriza students to be able to leave campus earlier, due to the realities of femicide at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands and Mexico.

Student Success and Leadership. Addressing the campus climate and basic needs that Transfronterizx students face in both postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands is important to wholistically foster their student development, learning and success. Most Transfronterizx students who participated in this study were first-generation college students, having first begun their higher education trajectories in the community college. As a result, the capital they obtain in the community college, along with their transborder capital, had a significant role in their overall student success. Their internal “Ganas de Salir Adelante” [translation: Drive to get Ahead] also had a significance on their “grit” to succeed academically. In spite of their intelligence and resiliencies in their academic success and transborder lives, they faced psychological and physical stressors. Consequently, supporting their basic needs, regardless of their academic success is paramount for their wholistic learning, development and student success.

Implementing and supporting leadership opportunities relevant to Transfronterizx students’ transborder lives is also conducive to their wholistic learning, development and success at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands. Evident in the “Building Bridges, Not Walls” findings,

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Transfronterizx students' civic leadership and activism in support of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers was of great importance to their positive sense of self and transborder identity development. Their leadership in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California, in solidarity with vulnerable communities at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, was just as important to their leadership in their own community. As a result, they were involved in creating spaces of inclusion for themselves and other Transfronterizx students in BorderClick, TASO. They were also at the forefront of the fight for the human rights of migrants, refugees, detainees and asylum seekers. The organization in support of migrants, refugees, detainees and asylum seekers at the California-Baja California Borderlands, where Transfronterizx students discussed their leaderships as volunteers, were the following:

Centro Cultural La Raza (San Diego, CA)

Detainee Allies (San Diego, CA)

Enclave Caracol (Tijuana, Baja California)

Pedacito de Cielo (Tijuana, Baja California)

Border Angels (San Diego, CA)

Aguilas del Desierto (Fallbrook, CA)

Otay Detention Center Resistance (San Diego, CA)

Al Otro Lado (Tijuana, Baja California)

I advise campus leaders at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands to partner with and support the organizations mentioned in this section to implement leadership opportunities for Transfronterizx students, that are relevant and important to their sense of self and transborder identity development.

Implications for Future Research

Implications for future research, policy and practice are also necessary in Tijuana, Baja California. There should be a focus on the policies and campus climate of universities in the region. Moreover, Transfronterizx students are not only present at the San Diego-Tijuana border region but also along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In building future research focused on Transfronterizx college students along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, scholars need to address the unique policies and political climates that affect students and their families. Additionally, further research is necessary to critically explore the intersectionalities of the social identities presented in the transborder identity model of this study. For example, the intersectionalities of sexual orientation and transborder identity should be further explored among Transfronterizx students who form part of the diverse LGBTQI+ community. Moreover, in expanding on this work along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the realities of Transfronterizx students who form part of the Native American Nations along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands should also be explored. Furthermore, Afro Latinxs and Black students also form part of the Transfronterizx student community, and their realities also need to be addressed, especially in light of the current political climate. Additionally, for students with disabilities, ability and disability is a salient intersectionality to their college life and needs be studied along with Transfronterizx students with disabilities, to critically address the diversity and inclusion of the study of transborder identity development.

Closing

Transfronterizx students form part of postsecondary and higher education institutions and enrich the campus communities through their transborder capital and civic leadership with their community and marginalized communities in both San Diego, CA, and Tijuana, Baja California.

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Yet, evident in the findings is the lack of institutional accountability from postsecondary and higher education campuses at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands, centered on addressing the basic needs, leadership and success of the Transfronterizx student population who form part of their campus communities. The few spaces of inclusion for Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions discussed in this study have been implemented through grassroots student-led change initiatives by Transfronterizx students themselves with little to no institutional support. The institutional accountability of postsecondary and higher education campuses at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands for the learning and development of Transfronterizx students is critically necessary through tangible top-down leadership efforts, such as long-lasting initiatives, funding for programing and policies centered on addressing the basic needs of this student population. Institutional efforts in postsecondary and higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands are also necessary in supporting transborder student allies who are dedicated to fostering the learning and development of Transfronterizx students. Lastly, to wholistically foster the learning, development and success of Transfronterizx students; institutional efforts dedicated to future research, policy and practice are necessary through K-12, postsecondary and higher education campuses on both sides of the border, along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Student Recruitment Letter

Subject: Unraveling the Representations of a Transborder Cultural Identity for Transfronterizo

Students from the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region

Hi, my name is Vanessa Falcon, and I am a doctoral student in the Joint PhD in Education Program at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. I am conducting this study in order to create an understanding of the visual representations that transfronterizo college students and former college students ascribe to their transborder cultural identity according to their transborder interactions. **You are welcomed to participate in this study if you are:**

- (a) At least 18 years of age.
- (b) Enrolled in at least 6 units at a higher education institution or have previously attended a higher education institution.
- (c) Commute between San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, or
- (d) Travel to Tijuana, Mexico frequently.

You are invited to participate in this study by sharing the images, videos, sounds and/or narratives that are significant to your transborder cultural identity that you will develop through your participation in the Borderclick workshops. You are welcomed to share your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives from all 12 Borderclick sessions or only some or one of the sessions.

Your confidentiality will be ensured as a participant in this study. Additionally, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdrawal from participating in this study at any time. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at vannessafalcon@gmail.com.

Thank you,

Vannessa Falcon, M.S.

Graduate Student, Ph.D. in Education

SDSU/CGU Joint Doctoral Program in Education

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Appendix B: Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Unraveling The Representations of a Transborder Cultural Identity and Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices for Transfronterizo Students from the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My name is Vanessa Falcon and I am a doctoral student in the Joint PhD in Education Program at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. I am conducting this study in order to create an understanding of the visual representations that transfronterizo college students and former college students ascribe to their transborder cultural identity according to their transborder interactions.

To participate in this study you must meet the following characteristics: (a) at least 18 years of age; (b) enrolled in at least 6 units at a higher education institution or have previously attended a higher education institution; (c) commute between San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, or; (d) travel to Tijuana, Mexico frequently.

PROCEDURES

This study is in conjunction with your participation in the Borderclick initiative at the AjA project. Through Borderclick you will engage in 12 participatory visual literary workshops documenting your transborder experiences through images, videos, sounds and narratives. You are invited to participate in this study by sharing the images, videos, sounds and/or narratives that are significant to your transborder cultural identity that you will develop through your participation in the Borderclick visual literacy workshops.

If you would like to participate in this study you will take a questionnaire with a total participation time of 10 minutes. In this questionnaire you will be asked to answer questions about your transborder lifestyle and to share your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives from all 12 Borderclick visual literacy sessions or only some or one of the sessions. Once you select the sessions and images, videos, sounds and/or narratives that you would like to share for this study, I will access these materials that you previously shared through Borderclick. I will only access the sessions and images, videos, sounds and/or narrative that you identify to share on the survey of this study. Your participation in the questionnaire is anonymous and you can stop or end the questionnaire at any time you wish. If you do not want to participate in the questionnaire and/or share your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives you do not have to participate. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdrawal from participating in this study and withdrawal from sharing your materials temporarily or permanently at any point.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits from participating in the study. However, please note that your participation in this research study will greatly contribute to a limited body of information on your particular student population. This study can benefit transfronterizo students in higher education institutions in San Diego, Ca. For example, the findings can be used by student affairs educators to create an inclusive and equitable campuses for the transfronterizo student population in higher education institutions in San Diego, CA. For example, student affairs educators in San Diego, CA can use the findings of this study to learn about the cultural experiences of transfronterizo students in higher education.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

None

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If at any point you would no longer like to participate in sharing your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives that is entirely up to you. There will be no consequences if you decide to not share some or any of your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and in no way will it affect your participation in the Borderclick Program. If you choose to not participate, your decision will not affect your participation in the Borderclick program. Moreover your participation or nonparticipation in this study will remain anonymous.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORT

The potential risks involved in this project are minimal. The participants may experience some discomfort in sharing images, videos, sounds and/or narratives about sensitive topics, such as exclusion and discrimination (given that transborder college students have reported these experiences in previous research). If you begin to feel uncomfortable for any reason, you may discontinue your participation either temporarily or permanently without consequences. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may withdraw your participation at any time. Participants should only share information that they are comfortable with others knowing and sharing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The images, videos, sounds and narratives will be analyzed for the written report of the findings of the study. You will have the opportunity to review the preliminary findings from this study and can offer suggestions for revision, modification, and change. The images, videos, sounds and narratives will be stored under password protection on the principal investigator's computer to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.

Your name and any other identifying information will be coded from the information you provide before it is analyzed. The codebook for this study will be stored separately from the images, videos, sounds and/or narratives that you will share in the principal investigator's passcode protected computer. Any information that is obtained from this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be revealed only with your permission or as required by law. If you disclose illegal or dangerous behavior during the interview (e.g. any kind of abuse or serious harm to self or others) we must report this information to the campus police and law enforcement authorities.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information that can potentially reveal your identity will be included. Federal regulations require that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) periodically review all approved and continuing projects that involve human subjects. To ensure that your rights as a subject are being protected in this study, it is possible that representatives of the Institutional Review Board may come to this research site to inspect study records.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact me for any information, comments, or concerns. Vannessa Falcon, email: vannessafalcon@gmail.com, or telephone (619) 654- 1571.

You may also contact my research advisors, Dr. Marva Cappello, email: cappello@mail.sdsu.edu, 619.594.1322 and Dr. Frank Harris III, email: frank.harris@sdsu.edu, (619) 594-1551.

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

If additional services that are beyond my training are required after the interview process I recommend you contact: Center for Community Counseling & Engagement (CCCE) at (619) 594-4918. For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: SDSU Division of Research Affairs at telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in the research project mentioned above. I have also been given a copy of this form for my personal records. I am 18 years of age or older.

I agree to participate in this study (Please print your name, sign, date and proceed to taking the demographic questionnaire for this study)

I do not agree to participating in this study (Please do not proceed to taking the demographic questionnaire)

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C: Demographics Questionnaire

Demographics Questionnaire

Instructions: Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop taking the survey you may do so at any point.

Pseudonym/ Alias: _____ Last four digits of cell number: _____ Date: _____

From what Borderclick sessions do you wish to share your images, videos, sounds and/or narratives, that are significant to your transborder cultural identity?

- All 12 sessions
- Selective sessions (Please identify the session or sessions): _____
- All images, videos, sounds and narratives
- Selective images, videos, sounds and/or narratives (Please identify the images, videos, sounds and/or narratives): _____

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. What racial group do identify with (Please select one)?

- American, Indian
- Asian, Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Biracial (Specify): _____
- Multiracial (Specify): _____
- Other (Specify): _____

4. What cultural group do you most identify with (Please select one)?

- American
- Mexican
- Hispanic or Latino
- Tijuanaense
- Mexican-American
- Transfronterizo/Transborder
- Mexican and American
- Other (Specify): _____

5. What is your citizenship status (Please select one):

- Born US citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Naturalized US Citizen
- Other (Specify): _____

6. Do you hold dual citizenship (US & Mexico)? No Yes

7. What is your American generational status (Please select one)?

- 1st generation (Migrated to the United States)
- 2nd generation (Born in the United States from immigrants parents)
- 3rd generation (Born in the United States from second generation parents)
- 4th generation (Born in the United States from third generation parents)
- 1.5 generation (Migrated to the United States as a child or adolescent)
- Other (Specify): _____

8. What is your mother's highest completed level of education?

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from high school or GED
- Attended a community college higher education institution, no degree
- Graduated from a community college higher education institution
- Attended a four-year university, no degree
- Graduated with a bachelor's degree
- Completed Master's degree or equivalent
- Completed PhD, MD, or advanced degree
- Other (Specify): _____

9. What is your father's highest completed level of education?

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from high school or GED
- Attended a community college higher education institution, no degree
- Graduated from a community college higher education institution
- Attended a four-year university, no degree
- Graduated with a bachelors degree
- Completed Master's degree or equivalent
- Completed PhD, MD, or advanced degree
- Other (Specify): _____

10. What is the name of the college or university you currently attend (or previously attended)?

11. Did you transfer from a community college (Please select one)?

- No
- Yes (Please specify the community college) _____

12. What is your student status (Please select one)?

- Undergraduate
- Graduate Master
- Graduate Doctoral
- Did not attended a college or university
- Graduated (Specify your degree and the year you graduated) _____
- Attended a college or university but did not graduate (Specify the last year you attended college) _____
- Other (Specify): _____

13. What is your current college GPA? (If you graduated or are not currently enrolled please state your graduating GPA or GPA when you last attend college.) _____

14. What is (was) your major or graduate program? _____

15. How many units are you taking this semester (if you are not currently enrolled, how many units did you take during your last semester)? _____

16. Are you currently working? (Please check one) No Yes

If you are working, how many hours a week do you work (leave blank if not working)?

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

17. How many people live in your household (if your independent list yourself and any dependents you have)? _____

18. Approximately what is your gross family income (if your independent list your gross income)?

19. What is your level of language proficiency in English (Please select one)?

Beginner Intermediate Advanced Native Speaker

20. What is your level of language proficiency in Spanish (Please select one)?

Beginner Intermediate Advanced Native Speaker

The term *transborder* is used to describe the movement of people between two countries and through an international border. People who live a transborder lifestyle constantly cross an international border and are frequently in two different countries.

21. What was your age when you began to live a transborder lifestyle? _____

22. Why did you begin to live a transborder lifestyle (Please select one)?

Economic hardship To be with family in Mexico
 Cheaper cost of living in Mexico To be with friends in Mexico
 Homelessness in the United States Employment in Mexico
 Academics in Mexico Leisure time in Mexico
 Community service in Mexico Parents were deported to Mexico
 Other (Specify): _____

23. Why do you currently live a transborder lifestyle (Please select one)?

Economic hardship To be with family in Mexico
 Cheaper cost of living in Mexico To be with friends in Mexico
 Homelessness in the United States Employment in Mexico
 Academics in Mexico Leisure time in Mexico
 Community service in Mexico Parents were deported to Mexico
 Other (Specify): _____

24. Do you have a stable living arrangement in the United States? No Yes (Please select one)

25. Do you have a stable living arrangement in Mexico? No Yes (Please select one)

26. How many days a week do you cross the border? _____

27. How many days a week do you spend in Mexico? _____

28. How many days a week do you spend in the US? _____

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item below by circling the number corresponding to your selection.

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

29. I enjoy living a transborder lifestyle in the US and Mexico
(1) *Strongly Disagree* (2) *Disagree* (3) *Agree* (4) *Strongly Agree*
30. If I could choose I would only live in one country
(1) *Strongly Disagree* (2) *Disagree* (3) *Agree* (4) *Strongly Agree*

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. If any point you wish to withdrawal from sharing your materials for this study after submitting this questionnaire please contact the principal researcher, Vanessa Falcon at vannessafalcon@gmail.com

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer



A PHOTOVOICE CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF
TRANSFRONTERIZX STUDENTS IN POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER
EDUCATION

RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

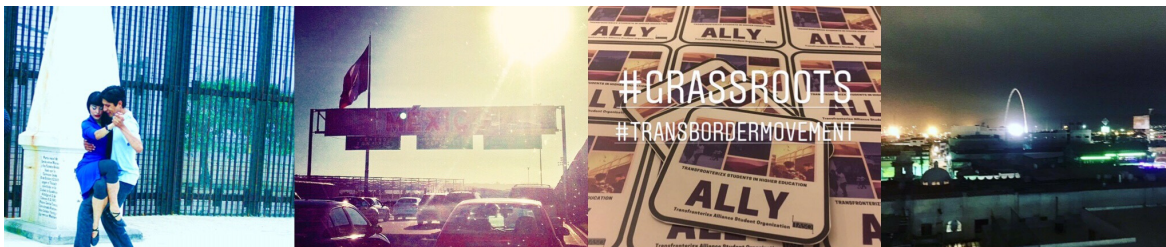
If you...

- (a) Live in San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, or
- (b) Travel to Tijuana, Mexico frequently, or
- (c) Previously crossed the San Diego-Tijuana border daily for at least a yr.
- (d) Enrolled in 6 or more units, or previously attended postsecondary or higher education
- (e) Are at least 18 years old;

you are eligible to participate in this study.

Your confidentiality will be ensured as a participant in the study. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how a transborder life affects the identity development of Transfronterizx college students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

If you are eligible and interested in participating in a one-on-one interview via zoom, please contact Vanessa Falcón Orta at vfalcon@sdsu.edu.



Appendix E: Recruitment Email

Subject: A Photovoice Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education [Research Volunteers Needed]

Hi, my name is Vanessa Falcón Orta and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Ph.D. in Education Program at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. I am conducting a study on Transfronterizx students and former students in postsecondary and higher education institutions from the San Diego-Tijuana border region in order to create an understanding of their identity development. **You are welcomed to participate in this study if you:**

- a) Live in San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, or
- b) Travel to Tijuana, Mexico frequently, or
- c) Previously crossed the San Diego-Tijuana border daily for at least a yr.
- d) Enrolled in 6 or more units, or previously attended postsecondary or higher education
- e) Are at least 18 years old

You are invited to participate in this study by sharing images that are significant to your transborder interactions, academic trajectories and identities. Involvement in this study will consist of one-on-one interviews, via zoom centered on discussions about your images in relevance to your transborder interactions, academic trajectories and identities.

Your confidentiality will be ensured as a participant in this study. Additionally, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdrawal from participating in this study at any time. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at vfalcon@sdsu.edu.

Thank you,

Vannessa Falcón Orta, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Ph.D. in Education
SDSU/CGU Joint Doctoral Program in Education
Founder, Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization
Founding Director, Transborder Student Ally Program
San Diego State University

Appendix F: Informed Consent

Informed Consent

The Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity: A Photovoice Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Transfronterizx Students in Postsecondary and Higher Education Institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My name is Vanessa Falcón Orta and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Ph.D. in Education Program at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. I am conducting this study in order to create an understanding of the identity development of Transfronterizx students and former students in postsecondary and higher education institutions from the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

To participate in this study you must meet the following characteristics: (a) Live in San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, or (b) Travel to Tijuana, Mexico frequently, or (c) Previously crossed the San Diego-Tijuana border daily for at least a yr. (d) Enrolled in 6 or more units, or previously attended postsecondary or higher education, and (e) Be at least 18 years old.

The reasons why you might want to participate in this project are that your insights will greatly contribute to the limited body of information on your student population, and student affairs educators can use the findings to create inclusive and equitable campus environments for Transfronterizx college students. The reasons why you might not want to participate in this research study are that you may experience some discomfort answering questions about sensitive topics, such as exclusion and discrimination (given that Transfronterizx college students have reported these experiences in previous research).

PROCEDURES

This study includes a demographics questionnaire, photovoice one-on-one interviews and images. You can choose to participate in all three components of this study, or just one or two of the components. The demographic questionnaire consists of 47 questions focused on obtaining information about your identity, academic trajectories and transborder interactions, with an approximate completion time of 20-30 minutes. Your participation in the questionnaire is voluntary and you may stop taking the questionnaire at anytime. If you consent to participate in this study, you will be provided the questionnaire via the Qualtrics Survey Software. You may participate in the questionnaire anonymously by using a pseudonym. Once you complete the questionnaire, you may contact me at vfalcon@sdsu.edu for more information on how to participate a photovoice one-on-one interview.

The photovoice one-on-one interviews consist of two interviews focused on exploring the intersections and developmental processes of your transborder identity, through images. Each interview is approximately 60 minutes, and you are welcomed to participate in one or both interviews. If you are interested in participating in a photovoice interview, you will receive a prompt via email focused on guiding your selection of images for this interview. You are invited to share these images with me via email and participate in a one-on-one interview focused on discussing your images in relevance to your academic trajectories, transborder interactions and identities. I would like to audio record the one-on-one interviews, but if you would like to participate without being audio recorded; I will stop the audio recording and take handwritten notes instead. You can stop, review, edit, or erase your audio-recorded interview at any time during or after the interview.

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The demographics questionnaire, photovoice one-on-one interviews and images will be analyzed to illustrate the results from this study. Based on line-by-line analysis of the transcribed photovoice interviews, the findings will be presented through thematic categories centered on illustrating the intersections and developmental processes of a Transborder identity. The thematic categories will be described through quotes and images from your participation in the demographics questionnaire, photovoice one-on-one interviews and images. All identifying information will be removed before presenting the results of this study, and pseudonyms will be used to describe participants. Any information that is obtained from this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be revealed only with your permission.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits from participating in the study. However, please note that your participation in this research study will greatly contribute to a limited body of information on your particular student population. This study can benefit Transfronterizx students in higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. For example, the findings of this study can be used by student affairs educators to create inclusive and equitable campus environments for Transfronterizx college students. Student affairs educators can also use the findings of this study to learn about the cultural experiences of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

None

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If at any point you would no longer like to participate in the demographics questionnaire, photovoice one-on-one interviews and/or sharing of your images that is entirely up to you. There will be no consequences if you decide to no longer participate in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORT

The potential risks involved in this study are minimal. Participants may experience some discomfort answering questions about sensitive topics, such as exclusion and discrimination (given that transborder college students have reported these experiences in previous research). Participation in this study also requires that you be audio taped, which may create some anxiety or discomfort. If you begin to feel uncomfortable for any reason, you may discontinue your participation either temporarily or permanently without consequences. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may withdraw your participation at any time.

You should only share in the one-on-one interviews information that you are comfortable with others knowing. Similarly, you should only share images that you are comfortable with others seeing. Full-face images of yourself and/or others will not be disclosed in this study, to protect the privacy and anonymity of you and others.

Participants could potentially be identified within this study, by connecting participants' names to the photovoice interview transcripts, demographic questionnaires and photographs. Overall, risk management procedures will be implemented in this study to protect your anonymity. All identifying information will be removed, and pseudonyms will be assigned to the demographic questionnaires, photovoice interview transcripts and images. Once, identifying information is removed the demographic questionnaires, photovoice one-on-one interview transcripts and images will be stored through the principal investigator's password protected university

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

online data collected systems and password protected computer. In the Images that are selected for publication purposes, faces and any identifying markers will be blurred or blocked.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The interview audio recordings will be transcribed line-by-line, by the lead researcher of this study and a professional transcription service. Within a year or upon completion of this study, the audio recordings will be permanently deleted. The future research plans of this project are to publish the findings in a dissertation and scholarly peer-reviewed journals. The demographic questionnaires, photovoice one-on-one interview transcripts, and images will be analyzed for the written report and publication of the findings of this study. You will have the opportunity to review the preliminary findings from this study and can offer suggestions for revisions, modifications, and changes.

The demographic questionnaires, audio photovoice one-on-one interviews, transcripts and images will be stored through the principal investigator's password protected university online data collected systems and password protected computer. Your name and any other identifying information will be coded from the information you provide before it is analyzed. The codebook for this study will be stored separately from the images and interviews in the principal investigator's passcode protected computer. Any information that is obtained from this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be revealed only with your permission or as required by law. If you disclose illegal or dangerous behavior during the interview (e.g. any kind of abuse or serious harm to self or others) I must report this information to the campus police and law enforcement authorities.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information that can potentially reveal your identity will be included. Federal regulations require that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) periodically review all approved and continuing projects that involve human subjects. To ensure that your rights as a subject are being protected in this study, it is possible that representatives of the Institutional Review Board may come to this research site to inspect study records.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact me for any questions, comments, or concerns via email at vfalcon@sdsu.edu, or by telephone at (619) 654-1571.

You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Marva Cappello via email at cappello@mail.sdsu.edu, or by telephone at (619) 594-1322.

If additional services that are beyond my training are required after the interview process, I recommend you contact: (1) SDSU's Counseling and Psychological Services at 619-594-5220, (2) SDSU's Counseling and Psychological Services: After-Hours Crisis Line at 888-724-7240, or (3) Center for Community Counseling & Engagement at (619) 594-4918.

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: SDSU Division of Research Affairs via email at irb@mail.sdsu.edu, or by telephone at [irb@mail.sdsu.edu](tel:6195944918).

I have read the above information and agree to participate in the research study mentioned above. I have also been given a copy of this form for my personal records. I am 18 years of age or older.

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

____ I agree to participate in this study (Optional-Please print your name, sign, date and proceed to taking the demographic questionnaire for this study.)

____ I do not agree to participating in this study (Please dot not proceed to taking the demographic questionnaire)

PROVIDING YOUR SIGNATURE IS OPTIONAL

PARTICIPANT

Print Name

Signature

Date

RESEARCHER

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix G: Demographics Questionnaire

Instructions: Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop taking this questionnaire you may do so at any time.

Pseudonym/ Alias: _____ Date: _____

Last four digits of cell phone number: _____

31. Age: _____

32. Gender: _____

33. What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify as?

- Native American
- Asian, Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Biracial (Specify): _____
- Multiracial(Specify): _____
- Other (Specify): _____

34. How do you identify culturally? _____

35. What is your U.S. citizenship status (Please select one):

- Born US citizen
- Naturalized US Citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Other (Specify): _____

36. Do you hold dual citizenship (US & Mexico)? No Yes

37. Do you hold dual citizenship with other nations other than the U.S and/or Mexico?

No Yes (Please name the nations): _____

38. What is your American generational status (Please select one)?

- 1st generation (Migrated to the United States)
- 2nd generation (Born in the United States from immigrants parents)
- 3rd generation (Born in the United States from second generation parents)
- 4th generation (Born in the Unites States from third generation parents)
- 1.5 generation (Migrated to the United States as a child or adolescent)
- Other (Specify): _____

39. Have attended a Borderclick sessions?

YES NO

40. Have you attended a sessions at the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO)?

YES NO

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41. Have you attended a sessions at the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP)
 YES NO
42. Have you participated in any other programs and/or organizations focused on transfronterizx youth from the San Diego-Tijuana border region?
 NO
 YES (What is the name of the program and/or organization(s): _____)
43. What is the name of the college or university you currently attend (or previously attended)?

44. Did you transfer from a community college (Please select one)?
 No
 Yes (Please specify the community college) _____
45. What is your student status (Please select one)?
 Undergraduate
 Graduate Master
 Graduate Doctoral
 Graduated (Specify your degree and the year you graduated) _____
 Attended a college or university but did not graduate (Specify the last year you attended college) _____
 Other (Specify): _____
46. What is (was) your major or graduate program? _____
47. Are you a first-generation college student (First in your family to attend a college or university)? _____
48. What is your current GPA? (If you graduated or are not currently enrolled please state your graduating GPA or GPA when you last attend college or university): _____
49. How many units are you taking this semester (if you are not currently enrolled, how many units did you take during your last semester)? _____
50. Are you currently working (Or previously worked, when you last attended college or university)? No Yes (How many hours per week?) _____
51. How many people live in your household? If you are independent list yourself and any dependents you may have. (If you are not currently enrolled, how many people lived in your household during your last semester?) _____

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52. Approximately what is your gross family income? If you are independent list your gross income. (If you are not currently enrolled, list your or your family's gross income during your last semester? _____)

53. What is your level of language proficiency in English (Please select one)?
 Beginner Intermediate Advanced Native Speaker

54. What is your level of language proficiency in Spanish (Please select one)?
 Beginner Intermediate Advanced Native Speaker

55. If you speak additional languages, please specify the language(s) and level of proficiency:

The term *transborder* is used to describe the movement of people between two countries and through an international border. People who live a transborder life constantly cross an international border and are frequently in two different countries.

56. What was your age when you began to live a transborder life? _____

57. How many years have you lived a transborder life? _____

58. What is the most salient reason(s) why you began to live a transborder life?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic hardship | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with family in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheaper cost of living in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with friends in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness in the United States | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academics in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure time in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community service in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents were deported to Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____ | |

59. Are you currently living a transborder life and/or are crossing the border frequently (once a week or more)? Yes No (please proceed to question 38)

60. What is the most important reason(s) why you currently live a transborder life?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic hardship | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with family in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheaper cost of living in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with friends in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness in the United States | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academics in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure time in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community service in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents were deported to Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____ | |

61. Do you have a stable living arrangement in the United States? No Yes

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62. Do you have a stable living arrangement in Mexico? No Yes

63. What border do you most frequently cross through? _____

64. What lane do you most frequently cross through?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian Normal Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Normal Lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian Ready Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Ready Lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian SENTRI Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle SENTRI Lane |

65. How many days a week do you cross the border? _____

66. How many days a week do you spend in Mexico? _____

67. How many days a week do you spend in the US? _____

If you are not currently living a transborder life, please proceed to answering questions 38 to 47 in reference to your past transborder experiences. If you are currently living a transborder life, please processed to answering questions 46-47.

68. What is the most important reason(s) to your recent past experience living a transborder life?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic hardship | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with family in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheaper cost of living in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> To be with friends in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness in the United States | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academics in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure time in Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community service in Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents were deported to Mexico |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____ | |

69. Did you have a stable living arrangement in the United States? No Yes

70. Did you have a stable living arrangement in Mexico? No Yes

71. What border did you most frequently cross through? _____

72. What lane did you most frequently cross through?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian Normal Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Normal Lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian Ready Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Ready Lane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian SENTRI Lane | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle SENTRI Lane |

73. How many days a week did you cross the border? _____

74. How many days a week did you spend in Mexico? _____

75. How many days a week did you spend in the US? _____

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Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each item below by circling the number corresponding to your selection.

76. I enjoy living a transborder life.

(2) *Strongly Disagree* (2) *Disagree* (3) *Agree* (4) *Strongly Agree*

77. If I could choose, I would only live in one country.

(2) *Strongly Disagree* (2) *Disagree* (3) *Agree* (4) *Strongly Agree*

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. If you would like to participate in a one-on-one interview via zoom, please contact Vanessa Falcón Orta at vfalcon@sdsu.edu.

Appendix H: Visual Thinking Strategies-Photovoice Interview Prompt-Part 1

Exploring the Intersections of a Transborder Identity

Instructions: Participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop participating in this interview you may do so at any time. This interview is focused on exploring the intersections of your transborder identity. The following concepts are salient transborder identity themes identified by Transfronterizx college students in previous research. Also, the following are important social, political and cultural identity intersections:

Transborder Identity Themes	Identity Intersections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Between • Ni de Aquí, ni de allá [Not from here, or from there] • Soy de Aquí, y soy de allá [I am from here, and I am from there] • Adaptability/ BorderHacks • Resilience • Resistance • Activism • Unity • Building bridges, not walls • Code-switching • Translanguaging • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race • Ethnicity • Gender • Sexual orientation • Gender expression • Ability/ disability • Social economic status • Mix-Status Family • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____

1. Please select a theme or themes that are most salient to your transborder identity and intersections of your transborder identity as a Transfronterizx college student. These experiences can be pertaining to your on-campus or off-campus experience as Transfronterizx student. If there is a theme or themes that are important to the intersections of your transborder identity, but are not listed above, please feel free to add the theme or themes in the lines provided and select those themes.

2. Once you select your theme(s), please identify one to ten images that are exemplar illustrations of the transborder identity and intersections of your transborder identity theme(s) you selected. If you wish to identify more than ten images, you may do so. Please, only select images that you have photographed or that people have photographed of you.

3. You are welcomed to photograph new images or select previous images you have taken in the past. You are also welcomed to be creative and photograph new images or select previous images that have literal or figurative representations about the intersections of your transborder identity. The images that represent the intersections of your transborder identity can be anything from people, situations, activities, and places to thoughts, feelings, dispositions and/or aspirations for the future. If you have previously participated in this study through prior interviews, and would like to provide images that you have previously created in this study, you are welcomed to do so.

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4. Once you have created and selected your images please email them to vfalcon@sdsu.edu with the subject: *Exploring The Intersections of a Transborder Identity*.

Note: This prompt is part of a dissertation study on Transfronterizx college students (Falcón Orta, [in preparation]).

Reference: Falcón Orta, [in preparation]. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity: A photovoice constructivist grounded theory study of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Claremont Graduate University & San Diego State University, California, USA.

Appendix I: Visual Thinking Strategies-Photovoice Interview Protocol-Part 1

Exploring The Intersections of a Transborder Identity

Script of Instructions: Participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop participating in this interview you may do so at any time.

1. *To aid the selection process of images provide participants with a prompt prior to participating in this interview focused on eliciting images centered on exploring the intersections of their transborder identity (see appendix E). Invite participants to present their carefully selected images.*
2. *Allow a few moments of silently looking before beginning the discussion. Post the following VTS questions to motivate and maintain the inquiry:*
 - What's going on/happening in this picture? (Asked once to initiate the discussion)
 - What do you see that makes you say that? (Asked whenever an interpretive comment is made)
 - What more can you/we find? (Asked frequently throughout the discussion to broaden and deepen the search for meaning)
3. *Facilitate the discussion by:*
 - Listening carefully to catch everything that participants say
 - Pointing to observations as students make comments, provide a "visual paraphrase"
 - Paraphrasing each comment, taking a moment to reflect on it while formulating the response to make sure all content and meaning are grasped and helpfully rephrased
 - Linking related comments whether participants agree or disagree, or build on one another's ideas
 - Remaining neutral by treating everyone and each comment in the same way
4. *Focus the discussion on exploring specific experiences, feeling and/or thoughts about the intersections of their transborder identities by asking the following semi-structured interview questions:*
 - Tell me about your background, how did you first begin to live a transborder life?
 - How would you define your identity as a result of your transborder interactions, such as crossing the border frequently and being in two different nations often?
 - What is/was college like?
 - What other aspect of your identity intersect with your transborder identity? How is/was it like when you cross(ed) the border? How was college like?
 - What other identities intersect with your transborder identity?
 - How did you represent the intersections of your transborder identity through the images you created for this interview?
 - Have you've had support in college focused on your experience as a transborder student? Have you've had support focused on the intersections of your transborder identity?
 - If you could give advise to a transborder student who identifies as _____ [fill in with participant's identified salient identity intersectionality(ies)], what would you tell them?
 - What advise would you give campus leaders in supporting transborder students who identifies as _____ [fill in with participant's identified salient identity intersectionality(ies)] in postsecondary and/or higher education?
 - Is there anything that you would like to say that you did not have an opportunity to say before we end this interview?
5. *Conclude by thanking students for their participation and by citing behaviors that are particularly appreciated.*

Note: This interview protocol is part of a dissertation study on Transfronterizx college students (Falcón Orta, [in preparation]) and it is informed by Visual Thinking Strategies (Hailey, Miller, & Yenawine, 2015).

References: Falcón Orta, [in preparation]. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity: A photovoice constructivist grounded theory study of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Claremont Graduate University & San Diego State University, California, USA. Hailey, D., Miller, A., & Yenawine, P. (2015). Understanding visual literacy: The visual thinking strategies approach. *In Essentials of teaching and integrating visual and media literacy* (pp. 49-73). Springer, Cham.

Appendix J: Visual Thinking Strategies-Photovoice Interview Prompt-Part 2

Exploring the Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity

Instructions: Participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop participating in this interview you may do so at any time. This interview is focused on exploring the developmental process of your transborder identity and the intersections of your identity. The following concepts are salient transborder identity themes identified by Transfronterizx college students in previous research. Also, the following are important social, political and cultural identity intersections:

Transborder Identity Themes	Identity Intersections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Between • Ni de Aquí, ni de allá [Not from here, or from there] • Soy de Aquí, y soy de allá [I am from here, and I am from there] • Adaptability/ BorderHacks • Resilience • Resistance • Activism • Unity • Building bridges, not walls • Code-switching • Translanguaging • _____ • _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race • Ethnicity • Gender • Sexual orientation • Gender expression • Ability/ disability • Social economic status • Mix-Status Families • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____

1. In this study development is described as knowledge, skills, strategies and/or long lasting dispositions that you have acquired through time spent coping with and adapting to life as a transfronterizx student. Please select a theme or themes that are most salient to the developmental process of your transborder identity and intersections of your identity as a Transfronterizx student. These experiences can be pertaining to your on-campus or off-campus developmental experiences as Transfronterizx student. If there is a theme or themes that are important to the developmental processes of the intersections of your transborder identity, but are not listed above, please feel free to add the theme(s) in the lines provided and select those themes.

2. Once you select your theme(s), please identify one to ten images that are exemplar illustrations of the theme(s) you selected. If you wish to identify more than ten images, you may do so. Please, only select images that you have photographed or that people have photographed of you.

3. You are welcomed to photograph new images or select previous images you have taken in the past. You are also welcomed to be creative and photograph new images or select previous images that have literal or figurative representations about the development of your transborder identity and the intersections of your identity. The images that represent the development of your transborder identity and the intersections of your identity can be anything from people, situations, activities, and/or places to thoughts, feelings, dispositions and/or aspirations for the future. If you have previously participated in this study through prior interviews, and would like to provide images that you have previously created in this study, you are welcomed to do so.

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4. Once you have created and selected your images please email them to vfalcon@sdsu.edu with the subject: *Exploring The Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity*.

Note: This prompt is part of a dissertation study on Transfronterizx college students (Falcón Orta, [in preparation]).

Reference: Falcón Orta, [in preparation]. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity: A photovoice constructivist grounded theory study of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Claremont Graduate University & San Diego State University, California, USA.

Appendix K: Visual Thinking Strategies-Photovoice Interview Protocol-Part 2

Exploring the Intersections and Developmental Processes of a Transborder Identity

Script of Instructions: Participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any point you wish to stop participating in this interview you may do so at any time.

1. *To aid the selection process of images provide participants with a prompt prior to participating in this interview focused on eliciting images centered on exploring the intersections and developmental processes of their transborder identity (see appendix F). Invite participants to present their carefully selected images.*
2. *Allow a few moments of silently looking before beginning the discussion. Post the following VTS questions to motivate and maintain the inquiry:*
 - What’s going on/happening in this picture? (Asked once to initiate the discussion)
 - What do you see that makes you say that? (Asked whenever an interpretive comment is made)
 - What more can you/we find? (Asked frequently throughout the discussion to broaden and deepen the search for meaning)
3. *Facilitate the discussion by:*
 - Listening carefully to catch everything that participants say
 - Pointing to observations as students make comments, provide a “visual paraphrase”
 - Paraphrasing each comment, taking a moment to reflect on it while formulating the response to make sure all content and meaning are grasped and helpfully rephrased
 - Linking related comments whether participants agree or disagree, or build on one another’s ideas
 - Remaining neutral by treating everyone and each comment in the same way
4. *Focus the discussion on exploring specific experiences, feeling and/or thoughts about the intersections and developmental processes of their transborder identity by asking the following semi-structured interview questions:*
 - How long have you lived a transborder life? How old were you when you began to live a transborder life?
 - How were your very first experiences like as a transborder student?
 - Did you face any challenges? Did you possess any strengths that helped you navigate through your initial transborder experiences?
 - What was your academic trajectory like? Did you have any support focused on your initial transborder student experiences?
 - In the years that you lived a transborder life, did you acquire any knowledge, skills, strategies and/or long lasting dispositions that helped you navigate through your transborder student experience?
 - Do you possess any skills today as a result of your transborder trajectories that have helped you succeed academically and/or professionally? Have you’ve had opportunities to apply these skills on-campus and/or off-campus?
 - Have you’ve had support in postsecondary and/or higher education focused on your experience as a transborder student? Have you’ve had support focused on the intersections and development of your transborder identity?

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- How did you represent the intersections and development of your transborder identity through the images you created for this interview?
- If you could give advise to a transborder student during their initial transborder experiences and college life in postsecondary and/or higher education what would you tell them?
- What advise would you give campus leaders in supporting transborder students during their college life in postsecondary and/or higher education?
- Is there anything that you would like to say that you did not have an opportunity to say before we end this interview?

5. *Conclude by thanking students for their participation and by citing behaviors that are particularly appreciated.*

Note: This interview protocol is part of a dissertation study on Transfronterizx college students (Falcón Orta, [in preparation]) and it is informed by Visual Thinking Strategies (Hailey, Miller, & Yenawine, 2015).

References: Falcón Orta, [in preparation]. The intersections and developmental processes of a transborder identity: A photovoice constructivist grounded theory study of Transfronterizx students in postsecondary and higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Claremont Graduate University & San Diego State University, California, USA. Hailey, D., Miller, A., & Yenawine, P. (2015). Understanding visual literacy: The visual thinking strategies approach. *In Essentials of teaching and integrating visual and media literacy* (pp. 49-73). Springer, Cham.

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Appendix L: Table 1: Gender, Ethnicity, Cultural Identification, Citizenship & Transborder Background

Table 1

Gender, Ethnicity, Cultural Identification, Citizenship & Transborder Background

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Cultural Identification	Immigration Status	Dual Citizenship	T.B. Age	Transborder Years
Aaron	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Tijuanense/ Mexican American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	14	*12
Ale	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Tijuanense/ Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	0	*27 **31
Alejandro	Male	Mexican American	Latinx	U.S. Citizen	No	0	*24 **28
Anette	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	No	13	*14
Arden	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	No	14	***11
Armando	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Tijuanense/ Mexican/ American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	15	*11
Borderat	Male	Mexican American	Mexican/ American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	0	*21
David	Male	Mexican American	Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	5	***26
Dennis	Male	Mexican American	Mexican American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	0	***30
Edsel	Male	Mexican American	Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	16	***4
Isaac	Male	Mexican American	Mexican	U.S. Citizen	No	7	***24
Isela	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Tijuanense/ Mexican American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	20	*4
Ivette	Female	Mexican American	Latina Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	Yes	0	***27
Jhovanna	Female	Mexican American	Mexican/ Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	No	7	**13 ***14
Joaquín	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Tijuanense/ Mexican American/ Latinx	U.S. Citizen	No	15	**14 ***15
Jocelyne	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	No	0	**25
John	Male	Mexican American	American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	16	***9
Josemar	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	Yes	5	*23 ***27

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Jovita	Female	Salvadorian & Mexican American	Latinx	U.S. Citizen	No	8	**15 ***15
Katz	Female	Mexican American	Mexicana	U.S. Citizen	Yes	20	***4
Leonardo	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	Yes	14	***20
Luis	Male	Mexican American	Mexican/ Queer Transborder Person of Color	U.S. Citizen	Yes	18	**4 ***5
María	Female	Mexican American	Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	0	**31
Nanitzia	Female	Mexican American	Mexican/ Transborder/ Transnational	U.S. Citizen	Yes	17	***4
Perla	Female	Mexican American	Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	13	***12
Rebecca	Female	Ilokano & German-Jewish American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	No	28	*2
Ricardo	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	Yes	14	***12
Sara	Female	Mexican American	Transfronterizx	U.S. Citizen	Yes	5	***19
Trudy	Female	White American	Californian	U.S. Citizen	No	31	*2
Ulises	Male	Mexican American	Transfronterizx/ Mexican American/ Mexican	U.S. Citizen	Yes	24	*1 **4 ***5
Vanessa	Female	Mexican American	Latinx/ Transborder/ Mexican American	U.S. Citizen	Yes	18	*1 **4 ***5
Viviana	Female	Mexican American	Mexican/ Transfronterizx/ Tijuanaense	U.S. Citizen	Yes	18	*1

Note: * = Phase 1: Fall 2016- Spring 2017, ** = Phase 2: Spring 2019-Spring 2020, *** = Phase 3: Summer 2020, Transborder Beginnings Age = Age When Student Began to Live a Transborder Life, Transborder Years = Years Living a Transborder Life

Appendix M: Table 2: Academic Trajectory

Table 2

Academic Trajectory

Name	K-12 in the U.S.	K-12 in Mexico	Postsecondary & HE in the U.S.	Postsecondary & HE in Mexico	Beyond the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands
Aaron	9-12	K-8	C.C. Alum	H.E. Courses	
Ale		K-12	C.C. Courses	B.A.	Japan, Philippines, Greece
Alejandro	K-12		C.C. Alum		Cambodia
Anette	7-12	K-6	H.E., M.A. & Doctoral Studies		
Arden	9-12	K-8	C.C. Transfer, HE Alum		
Armando	K-12		C.C. Transfer, B.A., M.A.		
Borderat	K-12		C.C. Alum		
David	K-12		C.C. Transfer, M.A. Graduate Student		
Dennis	K-12		C.C. Transfer, B.A., M.A. Graduate Student	H.E. Courses	Chile
Edsel	9-12	K-8	C.C. Student		
Isaac	3-12	K-2	C.C. Transfer, B.S., M.S.		
Isela		K-12	CC Alum		
Ivette	4-12	K-3	B.A., Double M.A. Graduate Student		Guatemala-Mexico Borderlands
Jhovanna	K-12		C.C. Student		
Joaquín	K-5, 10-12	5-9	C.C. Transfer, B.A., M.A.		Switzerland
Jocelyne	9-12	K-8	B.A.		
John	K-12		B.S.		
Josemar	K-12		B.A.	HE Courses	Japan, Germany
Jovita	K-12		B.A., M.A.		
Katz		K-12	C.C. Student		
Leonardo	9-12	K-12	C.C. Transfer, B.S. Student		Germany
Luis	K-12		B.A., M.A. Student		
María	K-12		B.A., M.A.		
Nanitzia		K-12	C.C. Transfer, B.A. Double Major		
Perla	7-12	K-6	C.C. Transfer, B.A., Teaching Credential Student		
Rebecca	K-12		B.A., C.C., M.A.		Japan, Germany, Austria, Philippines
Ricardo	9-12	K-8	C.C. Transfer, B.A., M.A. Graduate Student	H.E. Courses	Italy
Sara	K-12		B.A.	H.E. Courses	Cuba
Trudy	K-12		B.A., M.A., Ph.D.		

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Ulises	K-12		C.C. Transfer, B.A., M.A. Graduate Student		
Vanessa		K-12	C.C. Transfer, B.A. Double Major Student	H.E. Courses	
Viviana		K-12	C.C. Transfer, B.A.		

Note: Beyond the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands = Studies, Professional Involvement & Leadership Beyond the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

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Appendix N: Table 3: Age, Language Proficiency, Postsecondary and Higher Education Status

Table 3

Age, Language Proficiency, Postsecondary and Higher Education Status

Name	Age	Language Proficiency	Academic Status	1 st Gen in the U.S.	CC Trans.	Current Academic Status
Aaron	*26	*Advanced English & Native Spanish	*CC Student	Yes	Yes	CC Alum, Industrial Engineering, Computer Aided Design & Solid Modeling Drafting
Ale	*27 **31	*Intermediate English & Native Spanish **Intermediate English & Native Spanish	*B.A. **B.A.	Yes	Yes	B.A., Photography
Alejandro	*24 **28	* Native English & Native Spanish ** Native English & Native Spanish	*CC Student **CC Alum	Yes	No	CC Alum, Photography
Anette	*27	*Advanced English & Advanced Spanish	*Doctoral Student	Yes	No	Doctoral Student, Learning Technologies
Arden	***24	***Advanced English & Native Spanish	***HE Student	Yes	Yes	B.A., Political Science
Armando	*26	*Advanced English & Native Spanish	*M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.A., Higher Education: Student Affairs
Borderat	*21	* Native English & Native Spanish	*CC Student	Yes	No	CC Alum, Art
David	***31	* **Native English & Native Spanish	*** M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.A. Graduate Student, Education
Dennis	***30	* **Native English & Native Spanish	*** M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.A. Graduate Student, Higher Education Leadership
Edsel	***20	***Advanced English, Native Spanish & Beginner Italian	***CC Student	Yes	No	CC Student, Civil Engineering
Isaac	***31	* ** Advanced English, Native Spanish, Intermediate Portuguese	*** M.S. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.S. Graduate Student, Science in Biochemistry
Isela	*24	*Intermediate English & Native Spanish	*CC Student	Yes	No	CC Alum, Photography & Art
Ivette	***27	***Advanced English, Native Spanish	***Double M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	No	Double M.A. Graduate Student, Latin American Studies & Public Health

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Jhovanna	**20 ***21	** Intermediate English & Intermediate Spanish *** Advanced English & Advanced Spanish	** CC Student ***CC Student	Yes	No	CC Student, Sociology
Joaquín	**29 ***30	** Native English, Native Spanish & Intermediate Italian *** Native English, Native Spanish & Intermediate Italian	**M.A. ***M.A.	Yes	Yes	M.A., Public Policy and Administration
Jocelyne	**25	**Advanced English, Native Spanish	**B.A.	Yes	No	B.A., Business Administration, Minor in Political Science
John	***25	***Native English & Native Spanish	***B.S.	No	No	B.S., Biology
Josemar	*28 ***32	**Advanced English & Advanced Spanish ***Advanced English & Advanced Spanish	*B.A. ***B.A.	Yes	Yes	B.A., Science in Graphic Design and Media Arts
Jovita	**23 ***23	**Advanced English & Advanced Spanish ***Advanced English & Advanced Spanish	**M.A. Student ***M.A. Student	Yes	No	M.A., Counseling
Katz	***24	*** Intermediate English & Native Spanish	***CC Student	Yes	No	CC Student, Sustainability – Environmental Studies
Leonardo	***34	* **Native English & Native Spanish	***B.S. Student	Yes	Yes	B.S. Student in Mechanical Engineering
Luis	**22 ***23	**Native English & Intermediate Spanish ***Native English & Intermediate Spanish	**M.A. Student ***M.A. Student	Yes	No	M.A., School-Based Clinical Counseling
María	**31	**Advanced English, Native Spanish	**M.A.	Yes	No	M.A., Migration Studies
Nanitzia	***21	***Advanced English, Native Spanish	***Double Major B.A. Student	Yes	Yes	B.A., Double-Major, Communication & International Studies Political Science
Perla	***25	***Advanced English, Native Spanish	***Teaching Credential Student	Yes	Yes	Bilingual Single Subject Teaching Credential Program Student
Rebecca	*30	*Native English, Advanced Spanish, Advanced German, Beginner Ilokano and Japanese	*B.A., CC Photography Student	No	No	Master of Fine Arts, Research Student at Hiroshima City University in Sculpture
Ricardo	***26	***Advanced English, Native Spanish, Intermediate Italian	*B.A., M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.A. Graduate Student in Latin American Studies

TRANSBORDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Sara	***24	* **Native English & Native Spanish	B.A. Double Major	Yes	Yes	B.A. Double Major, Sociology & Spanish, minor in Latin American Studies
Trudy	*33	*Native English & Intermediate Spanish	*Doctoral Student	No	No	Ph.D. in Education
Ulises	*25 **28 ***29	*Advanced English & Native Spanish ** Advanced English & Native Spanish *** Advanced English & Native Spanish	*B.A. Student ** M.A. Graduate Student ***M.A. Graduate Student	Yes	Yes	M.A. Graduate Student in Philosophy
Vanessa	*19 **22 ***23	* Advanced English & Native Spanish ** Advanced English & Native Spanish *** Advanced English & Native Spanish	*CC Student ** B.A. Double Major ***B.A. Double Major	Yes	Yes	B.A. Student, Double Major, Theatre and Dance
Viviana	*19	* Advanced English & Native Spanish	*C.C. Student	Yes	Yes	B.A. in Theater

Note: * = Phase 1: Fall 2016- Spring 2017, ** = Phase 2: Spring 2019-Spring 2020, *** = Phase 3: Summer 2020, CC = Community College, 1st Gen in the U.S. = First-Generation College Student in the U.S., Age = Age During Participation In this Study, Language Proficiency = Self- Identified Language Proficiency, Academic Status = Academic Status During Participation in this Study, CC Transfer = Community College Transfer Student