Interweaving the Americas: A transnational metamorphosis autoethnography to transgress Ecuadorian education for Buen Vivir

by

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B.S., Universidad Estatal de Cuenca, 2008
M.S., Kansas State University, 2015

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

The paradigm of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) in education turns on the educational purpose regarding the transformation of the world. This autoethnography, which draws from *transnationalism theory* (Vertovec, 2009) and *transnational academic mobility* (Kim, 2010), explores how my critical self-examination of transformation shaped my lived experiences within transnational spaces to advance the conversation on postcolonial entanglements in education from the standpoint of a transnational migrant scholar and educator. Throughout three academic mobility journeys between Western and Latin American society, I explore privileges and disempowerment afforded me by my education, laden with postcolonial influences. To think about a different kind of education presumes recognizing and learning from my transnational lived experiences that evolved through the *seven stages of Conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2015). These lived experiences flourished my *transnational identity capital* (Kim, 2010) and activated my spirit for advocating for pedagogies for social transformation, relevancy, autonomy, resistance, liberation, and dialogue. This inquiry uses *writing as a method, proces*s, and *product* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), s*trategies for self-narratives data collection* (Chang, 2016), *narrative portraits analytical strategy* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), *arts-based* (Barone & Eisner, 2012), and *poetic* (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2003) approaches for representation. By creating a *self-portrait artwork* and the composition of a *poem*, I aim to inform, inspire, and reveal my self-exposure in my findings, which authenticates my critical/decolonial thinking by merging artistic practices with autoethnographic research. I reflectively, critically, and evocatively explore and disclose vulnerabilities, positionality, and perspectives as disruptive experiences of my progressive metamorphic process that initiates from my self-identification as an *Azogueña caterpillar* to transmute myself to a *transnational purple butterfly.*

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Dedication

To my parents

Thank you
for crossing to my side,
with resilience you endured
the ruptures of every good bye
and cradled my soul every time I came back

Thank you
For teaching me how to take my flight
without forgetting the pure essence of life
fidelity to my core values implied
valuing those from others so I could fly high

Chapter 1 - From an Azogueña Caterpillar to a Transnational Butterfly: The Journey Through Conocimiento (Knowledge) Towards Buen Vivir (Good Living)

Introduction

Living away from home is not for everyone.

You must have a big heart,
big enough
to pack everything and leave behind
joys and sorrows, friends and loves.

A big heart
That beats even harder
when you touch a floor that does not belong to you
or when you lie on a mattress
that does not have your shape
and an uncomfortable pillow without your smell
and you look at the ceiling wondering
where you are going?

Friends that are not yours,
a city that is strange to you

You must have a big heart,
so big to do new things.

A heart that sometimes fears
that loved ones have forgotten you,
because the present has taken control of their lives.

A big heart, but not too strong ... because

that's when it stops,
it gets under arrest,
it confuses you,
and it doesn't know who you are.

So, you lie on the mattress
that now has taken your shape a bit,
and the pillow is softer on one side,
and you wonder
who you are becoming beyond wondering where you are going?

Because when you leave,
more than moving towards a place,
you go towards a destination, YOURS.

We are made of another PASTA (paste),
Because those who have not lived it!
will not be able to understand it.
(Emmanuel Noriega, 2020, own translation)

Enlightening Cultural Behaviors of Farewells

There she was, in the warmest room of the home, the kitchen, my mom telling me aloud: "Mija" don't forget to pack the “Finalines” (pills), the atunes “van-cam” (tuna cans), the “manichos” (chocolate bars), the “galletas de amor” (amor cookies), and the “fundas de orchata” (natural herbs bags) in the lighter suitcase!

I responded "Si mami” (yes, mom), I won’t! Thank you!

On January fifteen, two thousand thirteen, I remember I was in the three floors house, which was located in front of the "Monumento de la Madre" (Mother Statue), rushing up and

down the stairs that connected the kitchen to my bedroom. I was moving things around from one room to the other, putting in and taking out things from my suitcases and feeling frustrated because it was hard to decide whether to pack more clothes and fewer shoes, or more shoes and fewer clothes, or fewer shoes and more food. My bags were getting full and I still had plenty of items to pack. Everything was chaos, it was impossible to pack all the items I wanted to take with me because I only had available "three" fifty pound suitcases—that was it. I had never traveled abroad before and never thought I would do so someday. Therefore, I was a novice with my packing skills, especially as "mujer Latina" (Latin woman), I would fit into the category of those women who, if they could, would pack the whole house regardless the trip they undertake.

When packing the three big bags, I found myself a complete apprentice; however, what I was determined to fit in any of my bags were the "Finalines," the tuna cans, the "manichos," the "amor-cookies" and the "orchata" bags, which I packed with so much care so they would not be ruined during the long hours of travel. These survival supplies were things my mother knew I valued the most, mainly the "Finalines," a type of pill that would help me with my sinus and allergy issues and sporadic headaches while I would be miles away from home. However, these supplies were not simply goods to take on my trip; they symbolized part of my culture and identity and would trans-connect me to my family and hometown.

As is customary in the majority of Latino families when a member in the family is going on a trip, especially if it is his/ her first trip, everyone comes to say goodbye and wish the traveler good luck, including relatives, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, and my occasion was no exception. The doorbell would not stop ringing, the "hora zero" (the countdown) was oncoming and members of my family were passing by the house to wish me good luck, safe travels, and toss "la patadita de la buena suerte" (good luck kick), which is a traditional way to

wish good luck in my *Azogueña* culture. However, what I was experiencing did not seem to be a moment of good luck, but the opposite. Perplexedly, my "big heart" started to beat harder, and I felt anxious when the third suitcase's zipper reached the top, meaning there was no turning back.

What started as a naive wish was becoming a reality! So, I told myself as I looked around my bedroom, which I knew would be the last time for days and months to come.

When going down the last stairway of the house with my carry-on in one hand and my passport in the other, there, on one side of the living room, was one side of this coin, my two older sisters, the "habladoras" (talkative), Ceci and Marthi. Although Ceci is older than Marthi by only a few years, Marthi matured earlier than Ceci. There they were, both staring at me. I remember thinking I didn't know what could be going through their minds, and all this was new for me and for them too. At that moment, when my gaze crossed with theirs, my "big heart" went through an endless battle of feelings and emotions. I felt calm, confident, sad, melancholy, anxious, and fear. I told myself it was natural to feel such "arrebato" (rupture) (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013) that generally cause the farewells. Assuming their roles as my older sisters, they gave me advice, uplifted my spirit with positive words and phrases like "take good care of yourself," "enjoy from this new experience," "be back soon," "we love you," etc. Still, they also could not miss voicing their famous phrase of "you behave well." I knew what they meant by that. I thanked God and my parents for granting me the privilege of being the third daughter in the family. They have honored me with two sisters, who, despite our minor differences by age, were and are my best friends, faithful supporters, and unconditional co-authors of my "locuras" (craziness), as Ceci would say. Precisely at that moment, they were faithful witnesses of my new "locura" that was about to occur.

On the other side of the room was the other side of the coin, my three brothers, all younger than me. Wilson, Nestor, and Diego, the "callados" (the quiet ones) the opposite of the "habladoras." Usually, my brothers are all men of few words, they do not like talking too much, but when they feel like speaking, they convey profound and assertive messages. However, this perception is not a general rule for all men in the family. My father is the opposite of my brothers; he is like the "habladoras." He is not a man of few words, particularly when he feels it necessary to convey his messages and advice to the family.

Then my brothers were quiet and just looking around at the events going on in the house. With their discreet behavior, my brothers were not to show themselves vulnerable to their feelings and emotions. However, they were very attentive and generous to my last-minute requests. By fulfilling the last needs for my trip, my brothers showed me their love and unconditional support for this new experience to come into my life. They all together kindly carried the three heavy suitcases from my room to the vehicle that would take me to the initiation of my new "locura." Time was going fast, and the beginning of my *path [toward] conocimiento (knowledge)* (Anzaldua, 2013) was about to come.

Meanwhile, adjacent to the living room was the dining room, the most visited place in the house for moments of sharing and celebrating with family. There at the table that seats at least ten people, sometimes more, was "el jefe del hogar" (the head of home), my dad, as usual, who was rushing around the table pouring wine into small glasses in anticipation that a particular event was about to occur. My father was conscious that it was such a special celebration; though, he was unaware that such a great occasion he was about to celebrate would become the beginning of my *progressive transnational metamorphosis* that would change my life forever. I do not blame him for his uncertainty, because like me, he was unaware of what his *Azogueña*

caterpillar's destiny would be from the moment she would leave her home and how her near future would welcome her. Then suddenly I heard my father announcing with his strong and distinct voice:

> Now, the time to raise our wine glasses has come. Let's all make a toast in honor to my daughter, Elizabeth, who today embarks on her first trip to foreign lands. She has decided to leave our home for a while and take advantage of this excellent opportunity to acquire new "Conocimiento" (Knowledge) to benefit from her professional and personal growth and have a better future for "Buen Vivir" (Good Living) …..So, on behalf of her merits and efforts with this toast, we wish all the best on this new (transnational) experience, and we look forward to her return to our home….

It has been nine years since my dad's toast, and his heartfelt and accurate words still make my eyes tear, and my "big heart" beat stronger. As we say in my culture, "recordar es volver a vivir" (remembering is living again) but to me, "writing on my father's feelings is re-living."

As in Manuel Noriega's (2020) poem, "you must have a big heart to do new things." On January two thousand thirteen, the new thing I was doing was detaching myself from my parents' warmhearted home and moving away from my family's physical contact. I was leaving my comfort zone, my city Azogues-Ecuador, to become a living witness of the so-called "Dècada ganada" (won decade) (Acosta & Guijarro, 2017; Wilhelmi, 2018). "Dècada ganada" in Ecuador are two Spanish words meaning ten years of "Correismo's government" under philosophies aimed toward change, revolution, opportunities, possibilities, and development in the Ecuadorian society. The "Dècada ganada" era started in Ecuador in 2007 under the Presidency of economist Rafael Correa Delgado. The word "Correismo" comes from Correa, with radical change

processes through a new developing model and political cycle established under articulated economic plans and prioritization of public investment. President Correa initiated his mandate by promoting an endogenous development model whose notions are grounded on the *Endogenous growth theory* (Aghion et al., 1998). This theory holds that investment in human capital, innovation, and knowledge contributes significantly to economic growth.

Thus, when governments rule under an endogenous developing model, they seek to enhance the internal capacities of a local community or region. So, these capacities would strengthen society and its economy from the inside out by being sustainable over time. Under the foundations of this emerging model, Correa's government's main interest was to satisfy basic social needs and transform strategic production sectors within the country.

One of Correa's most extraordinary proposals was to address the transformation, modernization, and training of human talent. Through people induction to quality education and academic excellence, which are indispensable conditions to attain the objectives of the *Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir* (*PNVB*) (National Plan of Good Living). In Ecuador, the *PNVB* is founded on a critical diagnosis of the evolution of the economic, social, and political processes that characterized the failed development of the country in the last decades. Its vision seeks to depict the crisis, the evolution of thought and the dominant economic schemes, the institutional options, and the political decisions that resulted in significant problems for the human development of Ecuadorian society (Benito Gil, 2017; Gil Gesto, 2018).

During Correa's first presidential term in 2007 and after the constitutional changes in 2008, the *PNVB* 2009-2013 emerged with significant technical and political challenges and methodological and instrumental innovations. Among the many difficulties was the construction of a plurinational and intercultural State to attain *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) (Acosta, 2010) for

Ecuadorians. In the Montecristi Constituent Assembly in 2008, one of the core points of the debate was the questioning of the prevailing development regime. Consequently, the discussion moved towards proposals that include elements raised within and even outside the country. There, from the vision of those marginalized by the history of the last 500 years, the paradigm of "Buen Vivir or Sumak Kawsay" (in Kichwa) (Pazmay, 2017), a popular "term" in recent years and whose meaning is closely linked to the ancestral, was proposed as an opportunity to build another society. Based on the recognition of the cultural values existing in the country and the world.

A conception that also reveals the errors and limitations of the various theories of so-called development (Acosta, 2010; Cubillo-Guevara et al., 2016), *Buen Vivir* is developed from the demands for equality and social justice, and the recognition, appreciation, and dialogue of peoples and their cultures, knowledge, and ways of life. It is also understood as the way of life that allows happiness and perpetuates cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equity, and solidarity. Thus, *Buen Vivir* can be defined as a way of life in harmony or life in fullness (Cuestas-Caza, 2018; Inuca Lechón, 2017). With this notion of *Buen Vivir*, the *PNBV* 2009-2013 was a vision of what Ecuadorian society must become by implementing several strategies for its attainment. It was meant to be a long-term and sustainable plan that drives the country toward revolutionary changes, explored in the following sections.

I was reflecting on the bases and how my country, Ecuador, has been generating radical changes for its development. Thus, along with my father's farewell toast and my "big heart," I was beginning to be part of one of the revolutionary changes implemented by the political and socioeconomic project of the *PNBV* 2009-2013. This radical shift was related to *the improvement and advancement of Ecuadorian education*. Thus, the "Ten-Year Education Plan of Ecuador

(2006-2015)" (De la Herràn Gascòn et al., 2018; Ministerio de Educaciòn y Cultura, 2006), supported by the PNBV, seeks to commit the entire country to be medium and long-term educational policies. Among the main foundations and orientations of the Ecuadorian educational system, its vision stands out, which stipulates:

> A comprehensive, integrated, coordinated, decentralized, and flexible national educational system that meets the needs of individual and social learning. Education contributes to strengthening cultural identity, promoting unity in diversity, consolidating a society with intercultural awareness, strengthening the pluricultural and multiethnic country. With a universal, reflective, critical, participatory, supportive, and democratic vision, with knowledge, skills, and values that ensure conditions of competitiveness, productivity, and technical and scientific development to improve the quality of life of Ecuadorians and achieve sustainable development in the country. (Ministerio de Educaciòn y Cultura, 2006, p. 8)

With that same futuristic vision of satisfying social demands and the desire to attain my life in fullness through "Good Living." By stimulating my reflective, critical, and participatory conditions, I had to activate the warrior part of me to begin to imagine what it might look like when I had to confront socio-cultural, political, economic, and educational realities that were utterly strange to mine. Because I was leaving the only world and truth, I ever knew to cross borders and become identified as a migrant, *alien*, non-resident student, international student, Latina, and "Other" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). However, I was determined to let my "big heart" flow and take the risk, or I would be part of what Anzaldúa (2015) assertively declare "staying home and not venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth" (p. 3).

It was to overcome that stagnation in which I was without being conscious of it. Then, in two thousand thirteen, I was privileged to be part of one of the revolutionary constitutional changes regarding Ecuadorian education. And my reason for packing "three big bags" was that I was detaching from my cocoon to nurture myself *transnationally* for eight months. That was my first and apparently would be my last journey toward transformative academic mobility and professional development with a scientific and humanistic, technological, and innovative vision (SENESCYT, 2012c) in the United States of America. This academic opportunity encouraged me to be a diffuser of my knowledge, culture and be open to the construction of solutions for the educational problems of my country concerning the objectives of the *PNBV*.

Within the goals of the *PNBV*, the Ecuadorian constitution generated a public policy destined to strengthen human talent. This strengthening would fulfill a dual purpose: on the one hand, it would develop, improve, and consolidate human talent; and on the other, it would allow the generation of knowledge that would, in turn, be reinvested in society through public or private institutions. Furthermore, this reinvestment of human capital in the community would substantially enrich the social construction since it reinforces the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and areas of expertise, allowing the formation of a synchronized dialogue of knowledge among the population.

Given this perspective, the strategies and objectives established in the *PNVB* 2009-2013 to strengthen human talent through academic excellence represent the primary thrusters of my *constant transnational journeys*. These have catapulted my *progressive metamorphosis* and have kept me moving back and forth within the different "*states of Conocimiento*" (Knowledge) (Anzaldúa, 2015). Thus, to find myself constantly self-reflecting and revealing my lived experiences throughout this *transnational autoethnographic* study. Therefore, among the twelve

objectives and twelve strategies proposed in the PNBV 2009-2013, I highlight those indicating my reasons for having had:

> "a big heart,
> big enough,
> to pack everything and leave behind
> joys and sorrows, friends and loves" (Emmanuel Noriega, 2020)

To achieve the objectives demanded by the conceptual and philosophical framework of *Buen Vivir*, in 2007, the government developed two interrelated instruments for the definition of public policies. Which must be complied with throughout the public sector and as recommendation and alignment for the private sector, such as the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan) (2007-2010) and the *PNBV* (2009-2013) first version, and (2013-2017) second version. The Ecuadorian Constitution endorsed both instruments as a clear expression of the importance they should have on the process of change registered in Ecuador. *The National Development Plan* (PND) and *PNBV* contemplate diverse policies, strategies, and goals regarding education. For instance, in section 6.5 of the *NDP*, the transformation of higher education and the transfer of knowledge through science, technology, and innovation are openly proposed; as decisive elements to achieve the desired quality of life and progress the country needs.

It is important to emphasize that the three most essential elements of public policies in Ecuador were education, health, and infrastructure during Correa's government. However, of these three, one that acquired the utmost relevance during his presidential period, directly led by the President himself, was education and everything related to this area. Including reform of the educational system at all levels, professionalism, quality of human talent, the extensive

endowment of quality infrastructures, open support to science, technology, and innovation. Then specific policies, objectives, and strategies would be pivotal to achieve academic excellence and quality education in the Ecuadorian population.

Objectives and Strategies of National Plan of Good Living Aligned to Academic Excellence

PNBV 2009-2013

For the Citizen Revolution government, the political commitment to knowledge (education, science, technology, and innovation) became the fundamental pillar on which socio-economic and cultural changes would reinforce to generate progress and development. Thus, support for knowledge, its management, and transfer as an intangible, infinite good, and valuable results in the country's social, economic, and cultural progress, represented one of the fundamental axes on which the political change underpinned. This same support for knowledge led me towards my *transnational evolutionary and revolutionary destiny*. It is so that in one of Correa's (2009) speeches titled "Educational Revolution for Good Living," he referred to the need to overcome mediocrity through an "educational revolution" and focused his attention on and gave support to the processes of teacher evaluation. With his philosophy on "education as a knowledge revolution," Correa conveyed the following:

> We will never go back to the past. We are going to rescue public education so that it is of quality and genuine…. And that is what we will achieve in Ecuador: a general education of massive access, absolutely free, and extraordinary quality. There is no other way to develop; there is no other way to a more just society; there is no other way to a true democracy. In a country where only those who have money can access a decent education, it is a country doomed to failure. Commit social suicide; it is a perpetual society of classes, where those classes are created from the differences of education.... But let's not fool ourselves, comrades: the main thing in the educational process, the

> main thing in that chain to educate our young people, is called *a teacher*. Teachers are still at the center of the educational process. And teachers without excellence, without capacity, will make the educational system fail … For that quality and genuine education, for our young people and our children; for greatness and forever crushing mediocrity in this country, for freeing our educational system from the mafias that have dominated it for decades. For that new homeland of all that in the center have that liberating education, "hasta la victoria siempre" (ever onward to victory). (Remarks by President Rafael Correa in Guayaquil, on May 29, 2009, in the concentration in favor of teacher evaluation).

Consequently, for education as a knowledge revolution to emerge, public policies, objectives, and strategies were proposed to promote the liberation of the educational system through its improvement and of everyone involved in it, but mainly teachers. Thus, as a teacher being part of the knowledge revolution, it is essential to address specific objectives and strategies as the leading proponents for my *transnational academic mobility*. They have maintained my transnational metamorphic processes flourishing through academia. They have incited me to reach my *activist spirit* in support and advocacy to quality education for all as a "practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994).

Objective 2: To improve the capabilities and competences of citizens

2.2 Progressively improve the quality of education, focusing on rights, gender, intercultural and inclusive, to strengthen unity in diversity and promote permanence in the educational system and completion of studies.

> **(f)** To promote the role of teachers and researchers as subjects of rights, responsibilities, and agents of educational change.

2.4 To create instructional processes and continuous preparation programs for life, with a gender, generational and intercultural approach articulated to the objectives of Good Living.

(a) To design and apply professional development programs and continuous preparation processes that consider the needs of the population and the specificities of the territories.

2.5 To strengthen higher education with a scientific and humanistic vision, articulated with the objectives of *Buen Vivir*.

(e) *To promote scholarship programs for high-level teacher preparation*

2.6 To promote research and scientific knowledge, the revaluation of ancestral knowledge, and technological innovation.

(d) To promote sustained processes of academic instruction for teachers and researchers of all educational levels and recognition of their status as workers.

(g) To establish research and *specialization scholarship programs* according to national priorities, specialties of the territories, and gender, generational and intercultural criteria.

Strategies *PNBV 2009-2013*

Strategy 6.5: **Transformation of higher education and knowledge transfer through science, technology and innovation**

Similarly, investment in human talents that primarily study specific areas linked to the country's development needs through *fourth-level scholarships for master's, doctorate, and post-doctorate studies at top-level universities should be public policy*. Furthermore, within the same field, the country should promote *student mobility programs, mainly at the fourth level, for teachers and researchers at an interregional and international level to generate exchange*

networks and knowledge production. Finally, it is an effort to encourage universities to have more full-time professors-researchers with the highest academic level to build a university that, in addition to transmitting knowledge, also generates it.

Public policy of the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT) for the promotion of human talent in higher education

AGREEMENT No. 2012– 029

2.1. Objectives and strategies of the Public Policy for the Promotion of Human Talent in the areas of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

2.1.1. Objective 1: To institutionalize academic excellence as the primary criterion for allocating public resources for the promotion of human talent.

Specific objectives for the promotion of human talent in higher education

1. To strengthen all levels of higher education by recognizing academic excellence as the primary criterion.

4. To create programs to promote excellence and creativity in research in prioritized areas.

5. To privilege access to educational centers of excellence, inside and outside the country.

In addition to the objectives and strategies set out in the *PNBV 2009-0213* to improve the capabilities and competencies of Ecuadorian citizens, particular alternatives and means are considered as part of the public policy proposal, which in turn are an integral part of the National Human Talent System in the areas of Higher Education (SENASCYT, 2007, 2010; SENESCYT, 2012c). Among those means is the *awarding of scholarships* to provide better support to the preparation of human talent.

2.3.1. Scholarships

For the public policy proposal, scholarships consist of total or partial subsidies granted by a scholarship administering institution to national students and professionals who demonstrate academic excellence. To carry out higher education studies, preparation, improvement, professional development, and research under the face-to-face modality in the country or abroad. Alongside supporting people with high academic merits, the grants are aimed at helping people with limited economic resources, disabilities, or special abilities to access formal education. Among others, scholarships are financial aid awards funded by resources from the general budget of the State, from agreements signed with natural or legal persons, national or foreign, and from technical, cultural and economic, international, bilateral, or multilateral cooperation or resources intended to finance technical instruction studies (SENESCYT, 2012c).

At the same time that scholarships stimulate the academic, instructional, and professional improvement of Ecuadorians with high intellectual, cultural, sporting, artistic, scientific, and other disciplines. They also enable citizens to enter, stay, finish, and specialize at the country's different levels of formal education when studying in national or foreign institutions. In other words, scholarships as financial aid awards were, although they are still considered but to a lesser extent, an essential element for the adoption of the new productive matrix of Ecuador since they allow to have a highly specialized human capital. And this human capital would be reintegrated into employment in public or academic institutions; which in turn will allow the acquired abilities and skills to be at the service of society (SENESCYT, 2012c).

As a more helpful vehicle, the awarding of scholarships concerning education serves a crucial constitutional purpose. Education is one of the few areas that receive budgetary pre-allocation by constitutional mandate. In article 298 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, it is vital to make feasible a robust public policy that addresses the need to develop quality higher education

in the country. It is evident that conferring academic scholarships make it possible to address operational deficiencies in national education or, on the other hand, to serve educational sectors and areas of specialization that do not exist in the country. Thus, in the medium and long term, it would be feasible to strengthen the human capital on which the country's progress will rest and come about in successful compliance with the purposes outlined in the *PNBV*.

For this achievement to be possible, the main goal of Correa's government was to grant 1,500 fourth-level scholarships by 2013, most of which were aimed to achieve academic excellence and educational quality (SENESCYT, 2012c). That is why through this means, I, the *Azogueña caterpillar*, became an active participant in the prominent era of the "Decada ganada" (won decade) promoted by Correa's government under the political party known as the "Revolución Ciudadana" (Citizen Revolution) (Granda Sáenz, 2020). Although only ten years were not enough to solve structural problems inherited from the colonial era, in the last decade (2007-2017), Ecuador advanced in light of the timely economic situation, which allowed Correa's Government to prioritize public investment. Thus, Correa promoted endogenous development to satisfy basic needs and transform strategic production sectors. Above all, one of the essential priorities on his agenda was the improvement of education in the country through the accreditation of *scholarships and financial aid* for academic mobiles (like me), research professors, and students.

Making Meaning of My Academic Privilege Through a Scholarship

According to Marx (1852/1983), "men and women make their history, but not... under conditions they have chosen for themselves; rather on terms immediately existing, given and handed down to them" (p. 287, as cited in Denzin, 2013). This observation from Marx certainly relates to my metamorphic story from *an Azogueña caterpillar to a transnational butterfly*,

which initiated under conditions and situations that I had not pondered or chosen as part of my present life and my future. Of course, this was because I did not consider studying abroad or becoming a mobile scholar under a scholarship as my priority. Such conditions could hardly be reached or expected to become a reality someday in my country. By this, I mean it was unreal to think about having the privilege, "not a right," because that was not and is still part of my country's politicians' philosophy to access any initiative regarding financial aid or scholarship programs. Therefore, for professionals, particularly those in academia who dreamt and aspired to continue with their higher education studies, or at least have the opportunity to access professional preparation, specialized programs, or research ventures both in national and international contexts through a scholarship or any financial aid meant aspiring to the impossible.

Reflecting on scholarship privileges came to my mind one day when I was in the last year of my undergraduate program. Around 2004, my literature professor gave us the news that there was an opportunity of becoming scholarships' recipients to be part of a student exchange program. The occasion was for last year's students to study abroad for one semester. Enthusiastically, my professor encouraged us to apply to this opportunity, or at least that we started by reading the list of requirements to know if we were qualified candidates or were eligible for such an "opportunity of privileges." At this period (2000-2006), in the College of Philosophy at the University of Cuenca, where I was pursuing my career in English Language and Literature, the opportunity to study abroad through grants was unusual; at least that was what the authority in *power* made us think. Naturally, though, when there was a remote possibility to be granted one, then we would not fit in the category of being the prototype candidates for such "opportunity of privileges". It was dreamlike to be eligible for any financial aid or student scholarship for middle-class students and those considered *less*.

Realistically, it was illusory to think of even reading the list of requirements to apply for scholarships because although we would meet all the essentials, we would always be the last on the list of their ideal candidate students. We all knew that. The dark message was evident or the opposite, a clear message behind this anti-democratic and anti-meritocratic academic system. However, in my 23 years old and after being captive in traditional authoritative classrooms settings for so long, I felt unable to make my voice heard. I did not let my thoughts and feelings surface on the conditions applied to grant scholarships and financial aids to privileged students and other one-sided academic practices. I did not feel I had the *power* to make my voice heard within my limited capacity of critical thinking. I deem limited because, from my experience, the majority of my postcolonial teachers, if not all, did not consider essential their students' critical thinking skills development within their teaching agendas or was not a priority within their teaching philosophies.

Then I questioned myself: Are scholarships supposed to be aids granted to people (students) who cannot afford all or part of the expenses, in this case, those of studying abroad? That was an ironic question since I was aware of its answer. The majority of recipients of scholarships were those privileged from the upper social class or, even worse, the grants belonged to those university authorities' relatives, friends, godparents, acquaintances, and more. They were the ones who had all the advantages over us. The *social class privilege* was vastly evident.

In explicit terms, those who fit the "elite" category were mostly privileged with any scholarship, financial aid, or other academic privilege. Such privileges were for those to whom the administrative, economic, and political hegemony belonged and those who positioned themselves in the highest rank of the social hierarchy of the social stratification in Latin

America. It is similar to the case in the United States of America during the colonial era when colonial policies dictated individuals' land, civil, and political rights in New Spain based upon their skin color, race, ethnicity, and national origin (MacDonald, 2004). That identical criterion embraced the majority of Ecuadorian authorities in *power* to grant academic scholarships in most of the educational institutions in the country. In respect to this social class segregation, I reflect on Ladson Billings and Tate's (1995) views in my context, "the voice of people of color [all social class] is required for a complete analysis of the educational [Ecuadorian] system" (p. 58).

Thus, against the backdrop of historical inequities in the academic space, after ten years of being ascribed to the group of professionals unworthy to deserve a second chance in the "educational revolution", my *transnational mutation story*, in Marx's words, develops under conditions and opportunities "immediately existing, given and handed down" (Marx, 1852, 1983, p. 287, in Denzin, 2013) to me. And I had to flow with Tom Peters' quotation, "If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade" (Peters, 2021, para.1). Consequently, I did not want to lower the shade to this following announcement that came to my email on Tuesday, November twenty, 2012, at 4:05 pm:

> Comunicado SENESCYT
>
> Estimados/as Adjudicatarios/as:
>
> Reciban un cordial saludo de parte de la Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación SENESCYT.
>
> El propósito de este comunicado es para notificarle que usted cursará en el programa de capacitación de inglés en la **Universidad del Estado de Kansas**.
> El programa inicia el **14 de enero de 2013** y tendrá una duración de 2 semestres académicos. Finalizará el **14 de agosto de 2013**.

Pronto enviaremos otro comunicado con nueva información e indicaciones sobre los pasos a seguir.

"La revolución del conocimiento es un compromiso de todos, con su esfuerzo y el apoyo del Gobierno Nacional construiremos el Ecuador del Buen Vivir"

Saludos Cordiales,

Programa de becas "Enseña Inglés"

www.senescyt.gob.ec

Quito-Ecuador

SENESCYT announcement

Dear Recipients:

Receive warm greetings from the National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation SENESCYT.

The purpose of this communication is to notify you that you will be enrolled in the English training program at **Kansas State University.**
The program begins on **January 14, 2013** and will last for 2 academic semesters. It will end on **August 14, 2013.**

Soon we will send you another announcement with new information and instructions on the steps to follow.
"The knowledge revolution is a commitment of all, with their effort and the support of the National Government we will build the Ecuador of Good Living"

Best regards,

Scholarship program "Teach English"
www.senescyt.gob.ec
Quito, Ecuador

This announcement from the Scholarship program "Teach English" by the "Década ganada" meant the democratization of the granting of scholarships for the preparation or specialization of professionals in international universities (Kansas State University) in priority areas of knowledge (English teaching) for national development. For me, it meant deconstructing

my past experiences regarding “opportunities of privileges” and favoritism to those from the elite. But at the same time, this revolutionary academic opportunity announcement led me to cross-examine my positionality as an English teacher in public schools because now I was integrated into the group of the “privileged” ones. But, on the other hand, I, from the working socio-economic class, was being recognized as a qualified candidate to integrate the new generations of academics and high-level professionals who would strengthen their knowledge production with a scientific and humanistic vision under the *PNBV* 2009-0213 objectives.

As Jensen (1998) indicates in White privilege shapes the U.S., we should all dream big and pursue our dreams and not let anyone or anything stop us. But we all are the product of what we will ourselves to be, and the society in which we live enables us to be. Realizing this, my community, through the “Gobierno de la Revolución Ciudadana” (Citizen Revolution’s government), made me dream big by attempting to restructure certain elements that Ecuadorian society has constructed to maintain their power over oppressed and marginalized groups. Even though I attained my scholarship eligibility through meritocratic processes which ventured to promote equal opportunities among all socio-economic classes, my academic preparation status still positioned me within the advantaged group of professionals among other underprivileged groups. Thus, to be an English teacher as a foreign language propelled me to a higher level of academic privilege for calling it that.

Indeed, the "Teach English" program was the platform that would catapult me towards experiencing life-changing events while crossing transnational and temporary socio-cultural and academic bridges. The main objective of the "Teach English" program, led through SENESCYT, was to ensure the quality of English language teaching in students of public schools in Ecuador. This objective would be feasible through the intensive preparation of English teachers in service

at Basic General Education (BGE) and Unified General Baccalaureate (UGB) levels. Furthermore, by awarding several scholarships that allow the corresponding financial certification for this purpose. Indeed, this was one of the most significant " revolutionary" endeavors under Correa's government, i.e., to achieve academic excellence for the advancement of human talent by prioritizing state investment in a deliberate way to meet the objectives of the *PNBV*. Without neglecting parallel planning and operational capacity of other professional or knowledge areas, which were strategically crucial for Ecuador's development.

When I received the announcement about my scholarship by the "Teach English" program, I was devotedly committed to my professional career as an English teacher working full time at the Catholic University of Cuenca-Azogues. I had been experiencing the art of teaching for seven years at the primary, intermediate, and higher levels of education in public and private Ecuadorian classrooms. And reflecting first on my years of learning trajectory as a student in the national context, and then as a professional in the educational field, for attaining academic quality and emerging as a "complete human being" (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 42) in the Ecuadorian classrooms, I had not been challenged and inspired to learn how to

> Open my mind and heart so that I can know beyond the boundaries of what was acceptable, so that I can think and rethink, so that I can create new visions, so that my teaching enables transgressions- a movement against and beyond boundaries, a movement which makes education the *practice of freedom*. (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

Such education as a *practice of freedom* was what I would experience with my transnational journeys to Kansas State University through the revolutionary "Teach English" scholarship program. That freedom would fortify me to live socio-cultural, political, economic, but mainly educational realities completely alien and divergent from mine. That freedom relates

to those progressive professors working to transform the curriculum, so it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination. That freedom most individuals are willing to take a risk toward an engaged pedagogy and make their teaching practices a site of resistance (hook, 1994). On progressive teachers working to transform the curriculum through active and democratic pedagogy referred to by hooks, during one of my transnational journeys, I was stirred to open my mind and heart to take responsibility to reflect and critique my years of teaching English at different academic levels in Ecuadorian classrooms.

Indeed, before my first academic transnational experience at Kansas State University, my self-reflective and self-evaluating consciousness was not active in recognizing the process of my teaching practices. I was not wholly aware whether my instruction contributed to the transformation of the Ecuadorian English curriculum to benefit my students' learning process. I had been loyally preaching to my students the curriculum guidelines. Still, I never thought that through my teaching, I could challenge educational dominance systems by using engaged pedagogy as a practice of resistance. From such a standpoint, my blind spots occur due to the authoritarian, repressive, undemocratic, one-sided, imperative, and disciplinary (colonial and postcolonial) spaces where I "advanced" my education. This type of academic environment had a significant influence on my instructional career. It is what the pathways of my teaching practices were not reflecting—the teaching and learning process as a practice of freedom—because I was doing "well" what they efficiently taught me to do. They taught me not to think with a liberating and autonomous mind but with a sense of subordination and obedience. At this point in my life, I have realized that such oppressive teaching environments were means to maintain the status quo, often resistant to progress, and with that scarcity mentality in which one person must win and the other lose. Moreover, of course, students always had to lose, particularly those who did not

belong to the privileged upper class. Although it seems contradictory, over time, I have recognized that those past versions of me have not been worthless; otherwise, I would not have been narrating this story without them.

From this context, the first step to working upon my past versions and becoming an educator who "enables transgressions" (hooks, 1994, p. 12), I had to be willing to take the risk and give up my comfort zone. That comfort zone in which I had lived for thirty-two years to face endless, unexpected, painful-joyful, transitional processes. Which began with my father's memorable farewell toast and my first experience of undergoing "the rupture" (el arrebato), which symbolizes the first state of Conocimiento (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013), which I will refer to in the following chapters. Frankly, for my family, friends, community, and myself, what begins with a farewell on account of my participation in the "Teach English" program at Kansas State University for eight months, whether we like it or not, attains another meaning over time. In other words, this initiative of achieving the academic excellence of human talent stipulated in the *PNBV* transformed my personal and professional life forever.

Moving forward, my first privileged academic journey through a scholarship set off the main foundation of continuous alterations and transformations of my being (mind, body, and spirit). During my first academic mobility, I find myself persistently experiencing and living dual realities in socio-cultural, political, and academic contexts. Thus, the initial purpose of my departure takes me over time towards a process of undergoing a *progressive metamorphosis* by persuading me to be thoughtful, reflective, and introspective when I come to recognize and identify myself as an *Azogueña caterpillar*.

Escorted by my vulnerabilities and intersectionalities, my transmutation development was moving backward and forward across the seven states of *Conocimiento* until I found myself

confidently and enthusiastically aiming to achieve the "spiritual activism" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 568) state. This active spirit embodies this transnational autoethnographic study. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) developed *Conocimiento* as a culturally specific method situated within indigenous beliefs about the connection between the spirit and consciousness. Conocimiento is a theory of epistemological development that entails challenging oppressive conditions through individual consciousness and social justice actions. Anzaldúa explains that *Conocimiento* "challenge(s) official and conventional ways of the world, ways set up by those benefiting from such constructions" (pp. 541–542).

Thus, the process of *Conocimiento* consists of seven stages that stimulate individuals to reconsider, reassess, and readjust their thoughts, views, and beliefs, all in the service of moving forward in their lives. Together, the seven stages open the senses and enlarge the breadth and depth of consciousness, causing internal shifts and external changes. These seven stages, which are alternative ways of knowing and feeling, involve (1) el arrebato (the rupture), (2) Nepantla, (3) Coatlicue/ desconocimiento, (4) the call for transformation, (5) el compromise (the commitment), (6) putting coyolxauhqui together, (7) spiritual activism. Therefore, *Conocimiento* aims to develop individual epistemologies and outward social actions. Doing so entails individuals experiencing the nonlinear and cyclical seven stages of conocimiento, also referred to as spaces, which I detail in the following chapters. Besides, with my transnational stories and narratives, I intend to continue the dialogue, advance conversations, rethink conventional notions, and germinate new principles that lead us to the transformation and transgression of Ecuadorian education by succeeding in the well-desired philosophies of *Buen Vivir*.

Analogical View of Metamorphosis Through Contextual Stories

According to Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992), stories are what we have, the barometers by which we fashion our identities, organize and live our lives, connect and compare our lives to others, and make decisions about how to live. These tales open our hearts and eyes to ourselves and the world around us, helping us change our lives and our world for the better. Stories tell about our lives; they also become a part of our lives (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, pp. 1, 8). Rosenwald and Ochberg's perceptions regarding stories summarize my position in which my narratives in this autoethnographic study represent my life stages through experiences and valuable memories. They are stories of my changes and transformations that have gradually been constructed and re-constructed throughout reiterated phases of transnational transition. These transitions occurred while interacting between Western socio-cultural and academic spaces in the United States and Latin America social, political, and educational structures in Ecuador.

The intention of interweaving my narratives through personal stories and past experiences is to highlight episodes of my life where I have been going through permanent self-reflection, critical self-awareness, and understanding of my socio-cultural identity, values, traditions, and beliefs. Particularly to illustrate the ways I have been shifting into a more complex understanding and pragmatic acceptance of antecedents of my postcolonial educational culture.

In this respect, to story ourselves does not mean to describe the way it "really" happened; instead, it means to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 257). Thus, for Denzin (2008), our stories mean to "see and rediscover the past, not as a succession of events but as a series of scenes, inventions, emotions, and images" rewritten by the author within the conditions set by the author. In turn, as the story is being produced, it affects the authors re-experience of what happened (Denzin, 2008a, p. 118; see also Ulmer, 1989).

Given Denzin's perspective of our stories means to see and rediscover the past through a series of scenes, emotions, and images, my next story, *The Little Green Caterpillar* (Bosque de fantasías, 2013; Granda, 1970), incites me to re-experience a flurry of memories, emotions, images, and reactions while I unfold its scheme. Pointedly, this story denotes the renaissance of a period of my life in the past, which germinates and comes to life through my lived realities and empirical experiences when switching transnational spaces and multiplicity perspectives. The *Little Green Caterpillar* story experience in my childhood is the basis for celebrating my identity as an *Azogueña Caterpillar* and then as a *Transnational Butterfly*. Through an analogy and "analogical reasoning, or argument by analogy" (Gentner & Smith, 2012, p. 189), which is a specific way of thinking based on the idea that because two or more things are similar in some respects, they are probably also similar in some further consideration. I offer additional insights into developing my thinking and self-critical reflection and open new avenues into my autoethnographic work. Besides, it allows me to create shifts in consciousness which leads me to acquire additional, potentially transformative perspectives, different ways to understand myself, my circumstances, and my worlds.

Since the autoethnographer seeks to "extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived" (Bochner, 2000, p. 270; see also Adams & Jones, 2008, p. 374), the construction of this analogy between the *Little Green Caterpillar* and myself as *Azogueña Caterpillar* is not only to illustrate how the stories are alike but also to explain the path of my *transnational progressive metamorphosis* in a more engaging and evocative way. As Bochner (2002b) declares, "I try to convey experience in a way that evokes for me and my audience a sense of the significance and meaning the experience had for me and might have for

them” (p. 86). With *the Little Green Caterpillar* story, I welcome the feelings of meaning and membership this story provides.

Disclosing the Little Green Caterpillar from my Childhood

A few years ago, a small green caterpillar named Beth was born in the top of a tree. She had big brown eyes with long lashes. When Beth was born, everyone was very happy, because there has never been a caterpillar so happy and smiling as was little Beth.

Time passed and the green caterpillar Beth grew rapidly, she spent the mornings eating leaves, vegetables and fruits, which were her favorite food, and in the afternoons, she sat on the roots of some beautiful tree to watch the butterflies fly under the blue sky.

Butterflies are the cutest little creatures that exist, my preschool teacher narrated with her soft voice. They have large colorful wings, which they flap to rise and fly among the rays of the radiant sun; their eyes are large adorned with flirty lashes, and on their head, they have "antenitas” (antennas) that curl beautifully. Butterflies spend the day flying from one place to another, basking in the sun and kissing the flowers to feed on their delicious pollen.

Beth also wanted to have big wings and fly under the blue-sky catching rays of the sun, but, how could she? She was just a little green caterpillar. So, Beth would get up from the roots of the tree she was sitting on, and she would slowly crawl up to her little house.

One fine day, while Beth was eating the leaves of a small plant, a beautiful *violet-winged* butterfly perched next to her, to calmly sunbathe. Beth was excited and surprised; she had never seen a butterfly so close.

"Hello," the little caterpillar said shyly, "you are very cute."

The violet-winged butterfly flirtatiously flicked her lashes and smiled at Beth as she approached her.

"Thank you, you are also very pretty," said the little butterfly, flapping her colorful wings with grace."

"I'm not pretty," said Beth sadly, "I'm a simple green caterpillar, nothing more."

"Of course not! –She assured her, shaking her curled antennae the little butterfly- You have the most beautiful brown eyes I have ever seen, and when you are a butterfly, you will be a very beautiful butterfly."

“Being a butterfly myself? - Asked the little caterpillar confused - how can that be possible?"

“I was once a little caterpillar too, like you. I dreamed night and day of being a beautiful butterfly, flying among the currents of gentle air and giving kisses to the flowers so that they would give me their soft pollen, that is why I always ate the best leaves, to be healthy and strong- the butterfly began to explain by getting closer to the green caterpillar- I was constant and never stopped trying or I lost hope. Then one day, while it was falling in the sun, I started to build my chrysalis and I slept in it ... When I woke up, I had these beautiful *purple* wings - the little butterfly flapped her wings, flew around Beth and then left, chasing a ray of sunlight."

Beth was very excited and began to follow the advice of the cute butterfly, in the mornings she made an effort climbing the big trees to get the most nutritious leaves, which would make her grow strong and healthy, and in the afternoons, she would sit and watch the butterflies fly among the treetops, and never gave up hope.

One fine day, our little caterpillar, my preschool teacher kept narrating, felt ready to build her chrysalis. By the time the sun went down it was already finished, so she settled into it to sleep. She dreamed of many fluttering butterflies and beautiful sunrises. Upon waking, she slowly came out of the chrysalis. She yawned and shook as usual. When she opened her eyes,

she noticed that on her head there were some cute curled “antenitas”. She was very excited to see them. Then she looked back, and on her back were a pair of beautiful red wings.

Her biggest dream had come true!

As that flirty little butterfly told her, my teacher conveyed us, *perseverance, hope and effort* were the recipe to make any dream come true, even one as incredible as Beth's, who was no longer the little green caterpillar, but the pretty red-winged butterfly.

Although, for many years, my learning development was grounded under postcolonial conceptual frameworks and orthodox teaching philosophies, the *Little Green Caterpillar* storytelling ((Bosque de fantasías, 2013) is one of the most meaningful memories I have from my childhood at the Maria Montessori preschool. I remember that I enjoyed looking at the colorful images of the *Little Green Caterpillar* and the beautiful *purple* butterfly printed on each page while my teacher narrated the story. However, even though my teacher's poetic voice made the narrative interesting, I possessed limited critical thinking to understand and reflect on the meaning that resonated in the story. At this early age, my “preoperational cognitive state” (Piaget, 1964, p. 177) functioned as symbolic thought through fantasy and creativity. I was more interested in drawing and painting the caterpillar and butterfly than being captivated to analyze and manipulate thought patterns deliberately. In other words, I was delighted with my “magical thinking” (Piaget, 1971, p. 135), and there was no place for analysis and interpretation processes when the story reached my senses.

Thirty-four years have passed since I was introduced to the *Little Caterpillar* storytelling, and at this point in my life, this story does not mean simply a fusion of colorful images and “magical thinking.” Instead, this comes to life and becomes my own lived story which is not displayed in a storybook and is not narrated by a pre-school teacher. Instead, I am now the

absolute protagonist, creator, and narrator of experiential moments in my transnational life which I spent, like the *purple* butterfly, flying from one place to another (Manhattan, Kansas-Azogues, Ecuador), basking in the sun (Kansas State University) and kissing the flowers (professors, researchers, colleagues, classmates, and friends) to feed on their delicious pollen (knowledge) to build my chrysalis (academic agendas) and finally get my pair of beautiful *purple* wings (Master's and Doctorate degree). Just like the pretty red-winged butterfly, I, the *Azogueña caterpillar*, was persistent and never lost hope and confidence when facing and silently battling with my mind, my body, and my spirit, overwhelming flashes of reflection, self-criticism, critical thinking, and understanding, which invaded my peace of mind and all my senses were altered while undergoing each transitional stage. Through Sartre's version of the progressive-regressive method (1963, pp. 85-166), my metamorphosis process has progressed and matured over time, along with my coexistence within dissimilar societal structures.

It is then that the last nine years of my life summarizes in an experimental evolutionary process of my internal and external alterations and adaptations. By making myself vulnerable and exposed while I "evolve meaning and ethics of care" (Denzin, 2013, p. 73) of what I narrate and write in this work. As Anzaldúa (2015) explains, "transformations occur in the in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries" (p. 1). My *transnational metamorphosis* process manifests experiencing shifting consciousness, suffering transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives through the non-linear transitions of *Conocimiento,* which have been the windows into my inner life.

For Denzin (2013), some autoethnographies are more central than others. However, they all appear to be universal, while they change and take a different form depending on the writer, the place of writing, and the historical moment. They shape how lives are told, performed, and

understood (p. 7). Indeed, I intend to shape this *transnational autoethnographic* study with a critical approach. I aim to enlighten the meaning of the metamorphosis stages and process, which I ponder as a symbolic representation to explore my *transnational metamorphosis* development within socio-cultural, political, economic, but mainly educational spaces of two distinctive nations, Ecuador and the United States of America. Consequently, before I start unpacking my first experiences of my transnational metamorphosis through the Conocimiento states, I first reflect on the concept of the metamorphosis process in two contexts. First, in the scientific field of biology, next, I engage in the analysis, interpretation, and reflection on the significance of the metamorphosis stages illustrated in two novels of Latin American literature.

The Scientific Process of Metamorphosis

Morphological and physiological changes in the complex life cycles of certain living beings are essential to reach adulthood and survive. Those living beings' changes are part of their development and are genetically marked for each living species. Metamorphosis provides each of them with the necessary adaptations to face the different challenges the environment in which they live presents them.

The word metamorphosis comes from the Greek metamorphosis, composed of two parts *meta*, which means change, and *morphe*, which means form, known as a shape change (Bishop et al., 2006). In biological terms, it is the process of change or transformation at a physiological, structural, or morphological level, which involves several steps for the complete development of some vertebrate animals, mainly invertebrates. The evolutionary process that has led to metamorphosis has made these animals better adapt to the environment they inhabit. It has also provided them with the necessary tools to seek and colonize new spaces—territories with better living conditions such as food, water, and freedom from potential predators. One of the main

transformations is the appearance of wings in some insects (Bishop et al., 2006; Rolff et al., 2019).

Likewise, metamorphosis is a transformation process from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct stages. Thus, scientists distinguish two types of metamorphosis: one is the complete metamorphosis called "holometabolous," from the Greek words *holo* for "complete" or "whole," *meta* for "change," and the noun *bole* for "to throw." Holometabolous, then, means "completely changing," or "wholly changing." Therefore, in the complete metamorphosis, a larva completely changes its body plan to become an adult. The other type of metamorphosis is incomplete, in which only some parts of the animal's body change during metamorphosis. Animals that only partially change their bodies as they mature are called "hemimetabolous," from the Greek words *hemi* for "half," *meta* for "change," and the verb *bole* for "to throw." Hemimetabolous then is a word meaning "half-changing." For example, cockroaches, grasshoppers, and dragonflies hatch from eggs looking a lot like their adult selves. As they grow, they acquire wings and functioning reproductive organs, but they do not entirely remake their bodies like the holometabolous (Hammer & Moran, 2019; Konopova et al., 2011).

In the butterflies' case that goes through the "Holometabolous" metamorphosis, the idea of a worm-like caterpillar wrapping itself in a cocoon for weeks and then emerging as a beautiful butterfly is indeed strange. In the cocoon, caterpillars do not simply gain legs, wings, and an exoskeleton; they also grow new eyes, lose their leaf-eating mouthparts and replace them with nectar-sucking proboscises, and gain mature reproductive organs (Boggs, 1981). To accomplish this drastic change, a metamorphosing caterpillar digests itself. A great deal of energy and raw materials are required to turn a caterpillar into a butterfly. Thus, to make it possible, caterpillars

release enzymes that dissolve most of their bodies. Indeed, the hard shell of the cocoon is required not just to protect the metamorphosing insect from attack but also to keep its liquefying body bound together, lest it oozes away. However, not all of the caterpillar's cells are dissolved by these enzymes, particularly tissues called imaginal discs, to survive. Instead, they use the soup that used to be the rest of the caterpillar's body for nutrition. These imaginal discs can grow incredibly quickly by consuming the proteins, vitamins, and minerals, developing into the butterfly's mature body parts (Abbasi & Marcus, 2017; Boggs, 1981). The new body has almost nothing in common with the old body. It has new legs, new sensory organs, a new exoskeleton, a new reproductive system. Even its digestive system does not work the same way since it must now digest nectar instead of leaves. That is all in addition to the beautiful wings. This radical change allows butterflies to complete their life cycle very efficiently, with no competition between adult butterflies and caterpillars for food.

This notion of metamorphosis in biological terms conveys a distinctive meaning within Latin American literature.

The Meaning of Metamorphosis in Latin American Literature

In Latin American literature, the concept of metamorphosis conveys different meanings depending on the type of literary work, as in the case of these two novels: *Hombres de maíz* (Corn men) by Angel Asturias (1949) and *Siete lunas y Siete serpientes* (Seven moons and seven serpents) by Demetrio Aguilera Malta (1970). Metamorphosis is how a character transforms her physical appearance to suit her psychic identity by analyzing these two novels. The process of metamorphosis is nothing more than the effort to escape the human condition. The characters undergo a redefinition of their being, leading to the transmutation of the outer physical form to

reflect a psychic reality or inner reality. Hence, the process of metamorphosis implies a fluid world where alteration from one state to another is possible.

It is apparent to distinguish between two fundamental aspects of metamorphosis in these novels: *positive or progressive* and *negative or regressive*. The former is carried out by the desire and need to transcend the oppressive psychological conditions of the mechanized environment. This transcendence implies a passing from a lower state to a higher state, an evolution towards fullness, a progression towards reconciliation with the divine. Such would be the case in religious conversion, a totemic relationship evidenced in Nahualism (González, 2011). The transmutation from a human state to an animal state and vice versa is very frequent and is the very basis of the belief. Except, when it is a *negative or regressive* process, metamorphosis represents a defeat, an entrenchment, an evasion, or an escape from an intolerable environment or condition. It is a psychological trauma caused by a state of alienation and constitutes a renunciation and disassociation from the human condition, as witnessed in the *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (Kafka, 2013).

Thus, the *regressive* metamorphosis, as evidenced in Aguilera Malta's (1970) novel, is a work that has been seen as a kind of magical saga. At the archetypal level, it deals with the perennial confrontation between the forces of good and evil. However, it deals with the conflict between oppressors and oppressed in Latin America in its most immediate application. A mythical foreshadowing permeates everyday life, giving it a metaphysical dimension. In *Siete lunas y Siete serpientes* (1970), there are three specific metamorphosis cases of people who are transmuted into animals. For example, the metamorphosis of Candelario Mariscal into a caiman, Crisóstomo Chalena into a toad, and the transformation of Mandamás, the influential people of the town, into a kind of monster with multiple heads. These three cases of metamorphosis deal

with the transformation of character or group of characters into an appropriate animal to demonstrate the dehumanization of these beings. Since their actions are inspired by usury and low passions, the author metamorphoses them into animals expressing such behavior. Here, metamorphosis represents a metaphorization process that transforms the character's physical form to adapt it to his inner reality.

In contrast, Asturias (1949) explains the metamorphosis as *progressive or transcendental*. Two episodes, the “Curandero” (healer), who becomes the “Deer of the Seven Rozas,” and Nicho Aquino, who transmutes into a coyote, are based on the Mayan belief of Nahualism. In the novel, Nahualism is based on the assumption that man has an animal as protector and a kind of his “other self,” to such an extent that he can change his human form for that of the animal that is his “nahual” (Asturias, 1949, p.144). Again, Asturias uses the priest Valentín to explain the concept; the priest declares:

> Everyone talks about Nahualism and nobody knows what it is. He has his nahual, they say of any person, meaning that he has an animal that protects him. This is assumed, because just as Christians have the holy guardian angel, the Indian believes he has his nahual. (p. 146)

Thus, in the chapter entitled "Deer of the Seven Rozas," the death of the "Deer of the Seven Rozas," which is the "Curandero" (healer), occurs. It is the first example of metamorphosis where man and animal represent the same entity. The chapter entitled "Correo-Coyote" (Mail-Coyote) narrates the journey Nicho Aquino, the postman, makes from San Miguel Acaran to the capital. Aquino, anguished because his wife abandoned him, reaches the top of María Tecún. There, Hilario, the muleteer, went after Nicho, fearing that he would be unable to cross the top, and he saw Nicho metamorphosed into a coyote. In this situation, Nahualism has a

sense of transcendence from the human to the connection with the divinity. Furthermore, Nicho undertakes the journey to the underground, which is at the same time a journey towards himself, a journey to discover the primordial truth in the entrails of the earth. Thus, it is about the destruction of "Nicho-mail" that undergoes a spiritual regeneration by becoming a coyote.

This adventure marks the episode from the real to the transcendental. A spiritual metamorphosis takes place in the character. Consequently, this spiritual transmutation translates in the physical aspect of a metamorphosis of the man into a coyote, his protective animal, his transcendental self. Therefore, the union with the Nahual has the sense of a connection with the divine. It is, in a sense, the recovery of the telluric world supplanted at the beginning of the novel by economic progress, the rescue of the old order. This metamorphosis also coincides with an interior metamorphosis, and the transformation of man into an animal is something positive and progressive that transcends the human to link with the divine. Similarly, Nicho Aquino's descending to the cave in search of his wife constitutes an establishment of ties between the present and the ancestral, the human and the divine, a kind of return or reconciliation with divine forces.

By analyzing and interpreting these two novels, it is evident that the manifestation of the metamorphosis can vary from one text to another. For example, in *Seven Moons and Seven Serpents* (Aguilera Malta, 1970), it is harmful; it serves to divorce the “being” from his humanity and turn him into an animal that reflects his furious and satanic passion. It would also be the function of metamorphosis when it reflects a state of alienation. Then in the second novel, the purpose of shift is positive and serves to transcend the human condition to join the divinity, as is the case of the “healer’s” growth. Therefore, the outer change reflects an inner transformation in both circumstances, adapting the external physical form to the inner metamorphosis.

My intention of exposing distinctive meanings and perspectives of the metamorphosis process in the scientific field and Latin American novels has a specific purpose. It is because this autoethnographic study emerges from a comparative analogy perspective. By illuminating the transitional stages of my "Holometabolous" transnational metamorphosis through critical self-reflection, transitional dialogues, internal experiences, and expanded awareness of my lived stories in the last nine years of transcultural interconnectedness (Pennycook, 2006), and *transnational academic mobilities* (Kim, 2010).

Concerning this, Denzin's (2013) argument is precisely relevant when claiming that "no self or personal experience story is ever an individual production, instead, it drives from the larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts" (p. 56). He explains that one must penetrate and understand these larger structures to understand life, the epiphanies, and the personal experience and self-stories that represent and shape that life. They provide the language, emotions, ideologies, taken-for-granted understanding, and shared experiences from which the stories flow. So, "the taken for granted understandings constitute a frame of reference for understanding the larger story that is told and heard" (Denzin, 2013, p. 56). Aligned to this thinking and the criteria that the metamorphosis process implies, I seek to reflect on my "taken for granted understandings" and extract the meaning of my transnational/international socio-cultural and educational experiences. I begin by identifying and reflecting on my positionality as a woman, Azogueña-Cañari, Latina, mestiza, and graduate student, and teacher until I find myself analyzing, defining, and re-creating identity shifts in the position of transnational doctoral student at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas.

Embedded in this transnational metamorphosis autoethnography is developing my theoretical framework grounded on *Transnationalism* (Riccio, 2001; Brittain, 2002).

The *transnationalism* term is commonly used to contextualize and define migrant's cultural, economic, political, and social experiences" (Riccio, 2001, p. 583). The most relevant and recent literature regarding *transnationalism* is understood as the practices of migrants who live their lives across multiple nation-states or at least in two nation-states. Likewise, *Transnational Theory* is a framework that has emerged to understand the activities and experiences of immigrants across borders and the influence of these activities in their lives in the receiving community (Brittain, 2002). For example, Basch et al. (1994) define transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-started social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. They call these processes *transnationalism* to emphasize that many immigrants build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.

In this respect, *transnationalism* has reconstructed localities, regrouping due to the mobility of both people and ideas, the practices and meanings derived from multiple geographical and historical points of origin (Rizvi, 2019, p. 277). It has happened because of the greater extensiveness, intensity, and velocity of networked flows of information and resources (Vertovec, 2004, p. 972); thus, being inherently in-becoming, *transnationalism* is transformative, powerful enough to trigger societal changes (Tedeschi et al., 2020). Since transnationalism is an analytic lens used to understand immigrant and minority populations as a meeting of multiple simultaneous histories, *transnationalism* in this study refers to people who are connected to multiple nation-states as they understand and author themselves and are often in movement between multiple subject positions produced by the nation-states with which they are connected. Thus, I position this dissertation project within a *"transnational autoethnographic approach"* (Denzin, 2013). To refer to my transformative experiences and narratives as well as philosophies and theories which I write and narrate from my position as a transnational scholar who has lived

in more than one nation-state, speak two languages, and has moved between and outside national and socio-cultural borders, academic practices, and onto-epistemologies.

However, for me, to identify myself as a transnational scholar, as the *purple* butterfly who had to make her effort climbing the big trees to get the most nutritious leaves, or as "Nicho-mail" that, by becoming a coyote, undergoes a spiritual regeneration, I had to undertake "revolutionary" journeys. In these journeys, I was challenged to climb social-cultural and academic structural barriers and undergo transmutation processes by intertwining my body, mind, and spirit that led me to consciously take actions toward my evolutionary processes to discover and colonize new spaces where my "voice" could be heard. However, as an *Azogueña caterpillar,* to have the opportunity to make my voice heard as well to develop a voice capable of questioning taken-for-granted understandings, I had to give my vote of confidence and faith to one of the objectives of the *PNBV 2009-2013*, which refer, "To privilege access to educational centers of excellence, inside and outside the country." Thus, it is how, through my "three revolutionary privileged educational journeys to Kansas State University or what I call my "three shifts," I have been experiencing a "holometabolous" metamorphosis process which has gradually turned me into a transnational scholar or, as described at the beginning of this chapter, a transnational *purple* butterfly.

From the multiple philosophical thoughts learned throughout my educational journeys, there is one in particular that has instilled me to be prepared for growth and change, and it relates to Dewey's (1897) thought that "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform" (pp. 77-80). His notion that education is central to social transformation and development is reflected through my persistent academic preparation and active enactment within the educational context. As part of the society or being society myself, I have faced

transcendental changes and alterations in my way of thinking and behaving through my education in the last nine years. As Nela Martinez's (1912-2004), who is one of the Ecuadorian heroines who symbolizes the starting point for the voice of Ecuadorian women to be heard, and is well known for her activist ideology, proclaims that Ecuadorian women have to be prepared to face changes in our society by educating ourselves not only for work but also to achieve personal autonomy (Martinez, 2018). Equally, Nela has taught me that the degree of development is measured by the degree of freedom women have in a country (Wertzberger et al., 2020). By reflecting on Nela's thoughts, I feel confident by declaring that my autonomy and degree of freedom have been pursued and persevered by being immersed in transcendental learning environments and remarkable academic programs.

It is so that through my transnational journeys for achieving my academic excellence, I explore the complex relations between educational experiences in my country, Ecuador, imbued with postcolonial influences relating to social class, access and equity to education, my migration and transnational experiences and "education as a mobility providing tool" (Moldenhawer, 2005, p. 52). I reflect that my education (Ecuadorian) has been marked by postcolonial heritage, intergenerational conflicts, and patriarchal discourses. Although I concur that education has brought empowerment, privilege, and entitlement, I contend that I simultaneously experience feelings of disempowerment and inequalities. The postcolonial lens helps describe the effects of power, domination, economic privilege, social stratification, and discrimination in the Ecuadorian educational system.

In this context, to transgress from an *Azogueña caterpillar* rooted with postcolonial and hegemony philosophies to a *transnational butterfly* invigorated to reach my "spiritual activism," I had to go through learning processes of "correcting, improving, and altering the acquired

characteristics of past generations" (Brameld, 1974, pp. 12-13). Thus, throughout my last nine years, as an international student, English teacher, and graduate teaching assistant (GTA), I was challenged to "unlearned too much of what was originally learned, or rather was literally conditioned to learn" (Brameld, 1974, p. 67). Moreover, I had to engage in what Dewey (1939) clearly emphasizes, "It is humanity's capacity to engage actively and critically in the events of cultural experience – to take them apart, as it were, and to rearrange them in more satisfying, efficient, workable ways than before" (p. 61). My transformation process, both at a cultural level and educational arrangements were not simple, it involved going through several steps and stages, and like the butterfly, each state will gain its strength from the previous stages. Then my "three shifts" from an English teacher in national contexts to a "Go Teacher" learner and from a "Go Teacher" learner to a transnational scholar and educational activist were maturing by experiencing the *seven stages of Conocimiento* (knowledge) by Anzaldúa and Keating (2013).

In Anzaldúa's (2013) latest anthology, *This Bridge We Call Home*, in the chapter titled *now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts*, the path of conocimiento is a walkway to change; it guides every one of us to start from within, and then to use our inner selves in spiritual activism. She voices:

> Tu camino de conocimiento [your path of knowledge] requires that you encounter your shadow side and confront what you've programmed yourself (and have been programmed by your cultures) to avoid (desconocer) [the unkown], to confront traits and habits distorting how you see reality and inhibiting the full use of your facultades [faculties]. (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 540)

Anzaldúa's (2002) theoretical contribution and concepts reflect my own experiences, struggles, healing, transformations, and desire to go beyond description and representation. By

bridging historical moments with transnational experiences through recurring consciousness-raising that synthesizes my identity with cultural and educational changes and movement among multiple realities. Thus, centered on my experiences of "my path of *conocimento* through the seven stages" and in my position as a postcolonial student, transnational scholar, and educator with an active spirit, I tempt to reclaim the meaning of education. By reinstating it as the fundamental method to attain the practice of "Buen Vivir" (Good Living/ Sumak Kawsay) in Ecuadorian society.

Research Purpose and Questions

In creating these transnational autoethnography narratives, the primary purpose is to: (1) invite Ecuadorian educators to consciously (re)examine the reasons and purposes of their profession as educators within each of their positions and realities, (2) cultivate conditions for educators to adjust and revitalize their teaching practices aiming at developing students' critical thinking and emancipatory learning, thus promoting education as a practice of freedom, (3) inspire professionals in academia to pursue continuous professional preparation in response to the challenges posed by the paradigm of Buen Vivir, and (4) propose transnational teaching and learning perspectives aligned to the notions of Buen Vivir to enhance the Ecuadorian curriculum into the future.

To address these goals, the following research questions will guide this inquiry:

(1) In the field of education, how does the concept of transnational progressive learner manifest itself in my lived experiences, in relationship to the intersectional ethnographic spaces where I interact?

(2) How do my transnational lived experiences inform my interpretations between postcolonial educational practices found in Ecuadorian education, and the

achievement of academic excellence for a culture of harmony, equity, solidarity, and environmental consciousness as the core of Buen Vivir?

Significance of the Study

In a knowledge society, knowledge becomes the best asset to perpetuate the cycle of capitalist accumulation, but also, it can become a danger to it (Gil Gesto, 2018). Knowledge was a proposal that the Citizen Revolution managed as an alternative to the country's energy dependence and proposed to turn Ecuador into a knowledge society. Ecuador, as a knowledge society, understands human talent as the engine for changing the productive matrix. However, changes in the productive matrix require modifications in the consumption matrix and the cognitive matrix (Vice-presidency of the Republic, 2015, p. 7).

Therefore, the development of knowledge and human talent became indispensable to generating changes in Ecuadorians' productive matrix. A highly qualified workforce will favor the country's actual industrialization process and generate high value-added goods, as pointed out in 2013 by the Coordinating Minister of Knowledge and Human Talent, Guillaume Long, in an interview with the newspaper El Telégrafo121: "This new conception of human talent means promoting a robust educational sector from childhood to the doctorate, a comprehensive technical, technological, and university system that is coherent, democratic, quality and relevant" (Long, 2013).

In this sense, Knowledge Revolution for Correa meant that free, high-quality public education is the foundation for true democracy. Moreover, the way to get rid of the third world economy that depends on exporting raw materials is by improving all levels of education reinforcing community skills. That is so that the strengthening of the public education system was one of the main axes for the consolidation of social policies in Ecuador.

Through a thorough review of standards and guidelines in the Ten-Year Plan, there must be a relationship and relevance between the teaching professionals and the development of the teaching-learning process. It means that by employing educators in areas proper to their academic profile and professional expertise, students' learning process would benefit extensively. Then to rely on professionals, especially teachers who are knowledgeable, proficient, and competent in their educational practices, the higher education system must strengthen and support professional academic excellence. Moreover, for Correa's government, this could be achieved by granting scholarship programs for students and professionals to continue their studies at both national and international universities. Finally, it is to enhance the educational culture reflected in the development of science and technology that would later generate better living conditions for the population.

In this logic, the Citizen Revolution paved the way for a social economy of knowledge versus the knowledge society or cognitive capitalism (Gesto, 2018). The social economy of knowledge understands that knowledge is good but a public good. The potential of this good is its infinity, and its easy distribution provided the State supports it. Consequently, everyone should have access to knowledge; thus, education becomes crucial to develop and attain infinitude and dissemination of knowledge. Since education in Ecuador signifies the exercise of rights and the construction of a sovereign country and constitutes a strategic axis for national development through its people, this transnational autoethnographic study is a reference of my professional academic enhancement through coherent, democratic, quality, and relevant (Long, 2013) educational process. As well as, grounded on the social economy knowledge notion, my accessibility to knowledge was fostered by transnational/international education, transcultural interconnectedness experiences, and *transnational identity capital* (Kim, 2017) within academia.

From the notion that the development of a nation should not depend mainly on its subsoil or its potential exploitation of natural resources, instead, the capacities of its population to innovate, develop science and technology, or consolidate endogenous forms of development according to their reality and needs (Gesto, 2018). In this context, the significance of this autoethnography study validates and encourages the prioritization of public investment for the development and improvement of capacities in human talent. Likewise, my transnational metamorphic experiences disclosed in this study are the results of the revolutionary changes in the Ecuadorian public policy, which aimed to support the redefinition of the productive and economic development model and, above all, the human development of the country.

In other words, the significant public investment in human capital promoted by the Citizens' Revolution government is the cause for my personal and mainly professional growth within the academic excellence arena. Thus, changes regarding academic excellence, institutional specialization, the reinforcement of existing human talent, synergy and cooperation with international institutions of academic excellence (Kansas State University), and coordination between different social actors aspired by Correa's government are visible in this transnational academic work.

As a *metamorphosed educator,* I aspire to continue developing my activist spirit for quality and equity education for all, particularly for those Ecuadorians who historically have been and still are overpowered and repressed within our society for their low social class condition within the Latin America social stratification. This study demonstrates that the prioritization of public investment in quality education and efficient, professional preparation has been and will always be considered one of the essential elements in the process of change and progress of a country. Thus, together with my transnational professional evolution, which is

embodied in this work's development, I have been a faithful believer and practitioner of this motivating Ecuadorian slogan: Education is a commitment of all to change history. Moreover, that commitment I had assumed more consciously since that day when I received the email about the award of my scholarship where it said:

> "The knowledge revolution is a commitment of all, with your effort and the support of the National Government we will build the Ecuador of Good Living."

This "slogan" has become a tangible truth for me after nine years of going through transnational processes of revolution and evolution within academic excellence and knowledge production spaces, which is proven with this academic work. Likewise, this autoethnography study signifies my effort, successes, failures, and strength to overcome transnational barriers along with the support of the national government, which have kept my hope, determination, passion, and aspiration alive to attain the desired "Buen Vivir," which in part has been achieved through my holometabolous transnational metamorphosis from *Azogueña caterpillar* to *transnational purple butterfly.*

Organization of the Study

According to Jones et al. (2016), [auto]ethnographers-as-authors frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense-making. They form part of the representational processes in which they are engaging and are part of the story they are telling. Not only do autoethnographers form part of the representational processes, but those processes also inform them as the cultural meanings they co-create are constituted in conversation, action, and texts (p. 62). That is why this dissertation text is written and organized in a nontraditional format by which I intend to illustrate accounts of my transnational experiences by "living consciously, emotionally, and

reflexively" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 9.) in two distinct social realities. It is a compendium of scholarly narratives illustrative of multifaceted sociocultural intersectional realities relevant to Ecuadorian education and international academic preparation.

By using writing as method, process, and product, autoethnography has opened spaces for incorporating creative arts-based approaches (Anzaldúa, 2015; Leavy, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and this project embraces those creative possibilities. Creative approaches include new ways of thinking about voice, data, space, writing style, and the integration of creative genres of data representation and the documentation of the knowledge construction process. These creative approaches are used not only to add aesthetic merit to work and open new ways for readers to see and interact with complex sociocultural lived experiences but they are also intended to enhance the impact on the reader to help move people to action (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In this project, I regularly use short personal stories and poems (Leavy, 2009) to represent and explore my perspectives. These poetic moments are intended to open a practical path through the fragmented phases of my identity and voice. These poems and personal accounts are interwoven throughout this work into the scholarly narrative and analysis frame, which can be seen in other autoethnographic narratives (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013).

In this sense, the creative use of text in this nontraditional academic text intends to add aesthetic merit and break rank with traditional scholarly practices to make space for transnational ways of knowledge-making through exhaustive and meticulous analysis of my lived experiences in sociocultural areas. With these considerations, the chapter structures are constructed and organized in a nontraditional path and revealed in the following order: outcome

In chapter one, I describe the causes for the initiation of my transformational academic and socio-cultural experiences as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in

transnational spaces aiming to achieve academic and professional excellence. By considering the fundamental objectives and strategies for improving the Ecuadorian Education promoted by PNBV 2009-0213, I narrate my first experience of becoming a transnational/international learner. I started my first journey by detaching myself from my family, hometown, workplace place, social and cultural norms I have been accustomed to interacting with my entire life. Under political initiatives toward change, revolution, opportunities, possibilities, and development for Ecuadorian society through the "Decada ganada," I position and identify myself as an *Azogueña caterpillar.* After being privileged as one of the recipients of the "Teach English" scholarship program, and under the conceptual framework of Good Living, I experience crossing transnational and temporary socio-cultural and academic bridges. These stimulate me to undergo metamorphic stages when facing an unknown path of knowledge and transnational positionalities.

In chapter two, I position my autoethnographic study under the theory of *transnationalism*. Throughout extensive literature revision, I examine different perspectives of transnationalism throughout history and how it has influenced the migratory phenomenon founded in the relationships between origin and destination. Besides, by considering transnationalism as the theoretical framework for this study, I explore its different concepts applied to migrant mobility processes. Multiple meanings on transnationalism demarcate different perspectives and indicate various research areas such as social relations, cross borders, networks, flows of people, ideas and information, and diasporas. Likewise, it is pivotal to understand the significance of *transnational academic mobility*, the main trigger in beginning my transnational journeys. My academic mobility catapulted my *transnational identity capital*, which means shifting from hard, scientific, explicitly codified knowledge to organic, intrinsic, implicit, reflexive, spatialized

knowledge-namely embodied and encultured knowledge" (Kim, 2010, p. 589). Finally, I examine and reflect on individual accounts and narratives of mobile academics, which open possibilities for exploring the multiplicity of transnational academic experiences, relations, hybrid identities, and "brain transfer and transformation in a globalized space" (Kim, 2009b, p. 401). Transnational experiences in academic context through autoethnographic accounts induce critical theoretical questions, and new discourse emerges from understanding better and considering the meaning of transnational identities and positionalities within the academic world.

Chapter three provides the methodological foundations for autoethnography and how it emerged and developed throughout history. I explain methodological literature on the meaning of autoethnography and specific versions that align with this study. Additionally, I specify the position of autoethnography through its methods and writing scopes that interfere in this study's construction through reflection and interpretation of my lived experiences in transnational contexts. Additionally, I explain how this autoethnographic method aligns to transnationalism and the Path of Conocimiento to illuminate, value, and honor the meaning of my experiences throughout the research process. Finally, I explain my research design, including the methodological approach, data collection methods, data analysis, and interpretation. These were effectively selected based on the research questions and considering the purpose of this study.

Chapter four outlines my experiences of three academic journeys to Kansas State University and where my transnational evolutionary path was initiated by periodically moving backward and forwards among the "seven states of Conocimiento" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013). Besides, I recount the development of my *holometabolous metamorphosis process* by finding myself discovering, learning, unlearning, and reflecting on the western sociocultural, political, economic, and educational practices throughout my "three shifts" of moving back and forth

between a Western university (Kansas State University) and my home educational institutions in Ecuador.

In chapter five, under the angles of a non-traditional dissertation process, I reveal my transnational transitions through a self-narrative portrait data analysis, interpretation, and presentation procedures relevant for answering my research questions and this autoethnography study purpose. I adapted my data collection and management aligned to Chang's (2016) *strategies for self-narratives data collection*. The analysis method aided by a combination of (self) *narrative portraits analytical strategy* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), *writing as a method of inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and *theory-driven analytical features* (Bhattacharya, 2015) that assisted me identifying aspect specific to my research subject. Besides, by incorporating *creative arts-based approaches* (Anzaldúa, 2015; Leavy, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and *portraiture methodology* (Travis, 2020) and *narrative portraiture* (Rodriguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), I disclose how my identity, transnational decolonizing voice, and spirit essence emerged among multiple cultural and academic spaces and realities.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Understanding Transnationalism as a Framework for making meaning of my Transnational Identity Capital

Introduction

> A bridge is not just about one set of people crossing to the other side; it's also about those on the other side crossing to this side. It's about doing away with demarcations like "ours" and "theirs." It's about honoring people's otherness in ways that allow us to be changed by embracing that otherness rather than punishing others for having a different view, belief system, skin color, or spiritual practice. Diversity of perspectives expands and alters the dialogue, not in an

addon fashion but through a multiplicity that's transformational, such as in mestiza consciousness. (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 4)

Since ancient times, the human being has been in constant transit and border displacement. The growing international/transnational mobility today is a proven fact in a globalized world where the interdependence between nations is changing the social reality of the planet. Currently, migration is one of the central social phenomena playing a decisive role in the mobility of people. The increasing data on migration and mobility gathered over the last decade confirms that migration is closely related to broader global economic, social, political, and technological transformations (Blanco, 2006). It is mainly affecting a wide variety of political issues considered high priority. By analyzing the historical and contemporary factors on the evolution of migration globally, it is evident that we are on the cusp of profound global transformations and changes. Moreover, those notable changes occurring in our daily lives are influenced by the environment in which migration issues arise and manifest. Thus, as globalization processes deepen, these transformations increasingly shape our lives daily through the home, school, work, and social and spiritual existence.

From the geographical perspective, migration designates the displacement of a group or population of human beings or animals from a place of origin to another destination. The word *migration* comes from the Latin *migratĭo, migratiōnis*, which means *the action and effect of migrating (*Manso Guillén, 2016). Migration can be permanent when individuals establish their residence in the new place where they have settled or temporary when shorter stays. It can also be voluntary when the person who freely determines to migrate is the individual himself, or involuntary if the factors that determine it do not depend on the subject (Manso Guillén, 2016).

The causes that determine migrations are multiple and can be a product of different motivations and characteristics. Although, for instance, it is known of migration for political and economic reasons, the cultural factor also plays an essential role in the migration purpose. Generally, cultures with similar characteristics and extensive historical ties offer individuals better possibilities to develop their productive potential within society fully. Likewise, other more complex situations, such as nuclear accidents, armed conflicts, or wars (Crawford & Campbell, 2012). On the other hand, natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, so forth can cause the need for migration or mobility of a human population (Crawford & Campbell, 2012).

In this context, various are the factors that influence *human migration,* which is understood as the displacement of individuals or groups of people through a geographical space to settle in a place other than the one from which they originate, and this is motivated by social, political, economic, *educational/academic* and other motives. Then *international or external migration* involves the displacement of individuals or groups outside the borders of their country of origin to another (Glosario sobre Migración, 2006). Thus, due to its characteristics, significance, and intensity, the human migration issue has been analyzed in various disciplines and its corresponding theories.

Transnationalism as Theory

The implications and changes originated from migration throughout history have allowed the study of other transformations of the process and the incorporation of new theories as *transnationalism* (Faist, 2000; Kearney, 1995; Portes et al., 2003; Schiller et al., 1992, among others), which is a perspective that analyzes the migratory phenomenon based on the relationships between the place of origin and destination. More than fifteen years after its first

formulation, *transnationalism* has become one of the most fertile theoretical perspectives investigating migratory phenomena. The extensive fieldwork production has strengthened a theoretical corpus that, as is well known, emphasizes the heterogeneous universe of relational dynamics that migrants develop across borders. The transnational perspective tries to explain the tendency of migrants to create significant and uninterrupted ties with people, groups, and institutions located in the country of origin, as with those who have migrated to other countries.

Since *transnationalism* is a term commonly used to contextualize and define "migrants' cultural, economic, political, and social experiences" (Riccio, 2001, p. 583), the development of this chapter does not necessarily lie in the study of migratory flow as such. Instead, from my self-positionalities as a Latina migrant woman, international migrant, international graduate student, and transnational scholar and educator, I intend to analyze, interpret, understand, and reflect on my transnational lived experiences concerning my *transnational migratory (*Tsuda, 2012*)* status, *transnational identity capital* (Kim, 2017), transnational socio-cultural and academic activities during my journey through the *path of Conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2013). Furthermore, under the paradigms of the transnationalism theory as a conceptual lens, I aim to contextualize the production, transformation, and reconstruction of my socio-cultural, political, economic, and transnational academic spaces and the implications that derive from it.

The fact that the new perspective of *transnationalism* allows us to analyze how "migrants build and rebuild their lives simultaneously in more than one society" (Caglar, 2001, p. 607), for methodological and analytical reasons, it is necessary to establish as a unit of analysis of *transnationalism* to the migrant or the individual himself and other units, such as their organizations, communities, companies and political parties. However, the analysis continues to fall explicitly on the individual since the most viable starting point in investigating transnational

migration focuses on him or her (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Moreover, since most research from the perspective of *transnationalism* often seeks to visualize transnational organizations and institutions, the transnational migrant himself, as the central axis, has been left aside from research scopes. Therefore, it is essential to study deeply *migrant's activities* and *their lived experiences* at the individual level to better understand the different structures of transnationalism and its effects.

Similarly, the literature regarding studies on *transnationalism* has identified numerous benefits of transnational migrant activity both for the migrants themselves and for the countries of origin and destination (Carvajal, 2002; Eckstein & Najam, 2013; Levitt, 2001). As for the migrant, the main benefit of transnational activity is emotional since it allows them to maintain ties with their country of origin, culture, family, and friends. For the country of origin, the transnational activity of its migrants generates an economic benefit in the form of remittances, investments*, knowledge transfers*, contact networks, and increased trade. Moreover, contemplating all these effects together creates a counter-effect to brain drains (Faist, 2008). Within this flow, *transnationalism* also fosters the transfer of values, customs, and attitudes (Kelly & Lusis, 2006) that can benefit the modernization and transformation of the nation. Finally, in the case of the receiving or destination country, transnational migrants open new avenues in economic relations with the countries of origin and, in general, strengthen the influence and interdependence between the two. Altogether, *transnationalism* reinforces and promotes the impact of migration on the development of countries of origin.

In this regard, Pintor Sandoval's (2011) study shows that individuals deal with their migratory experience from their life history, customs, culture, and ideology during *transnationalism*. Simultaneously, trying to get closer with their actions and practices to the

society of origin, although symbolically since, as Touraine (1995) manifests, "society is not only reproduction and adaptation, it is also creation and production of itself" (p. 89) even beyond their national borders. With these social investments, the transnational migrants can define and transform the symbolic situation that unites them, but in addition to transforming, there is also the task of integrating and uniting their community.

Within this context, a large generation of authors and researchers have considered *migratory transnationalism* (Vertovec, 2001) as an object of study and have dedicated themselves to defining its content by operationalizing and empirically investigating its existence, manifestations, typologies, and consequences, thus generating an emerging and the energetic field of study. It is so that there are numerous empirical studies on concrete cases of transnational networks, activities, and communities. Empirical studies on contemporary transnationalism have substantially revolved around the political (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Portes et al., 2003) and economic (Guarnizo, 2003; Landolt, 2001; Portes et al., 2002; Taylor, 1999) dimensions of the phenomenon. Whereas the most ideological debate has focused on the potential incidence of *transnationalism* in the integration processes of immigrants in the host societies, that is, the supposed paradox between transnationalism and assimilation (Guarnizo et al., 2003). Thus, the most common context for research on *transnationalism* is the United States of America, where immigrants from Latin America are considered the most frequent transnational communities, although some studies ponder Chinese communities as the unit of analysis (Mitchell, 1993; Orozco, 2005; Tan, 2006).

Additionally, much of the research on *transnationalism* has emphasized the institutionalized or organized efforts of the immigrants in the U.S.A. (e.g., transnational committees) and to the macro social systems that are involved in the process of globalization

(e.g., transnational corporations) (Alvarez, 1998; Ribeiro, 2018). Likewise, some studies have focused on how immigrants in the U.S.A. have become organized in transnational grassroots movements by creating committees that aim to provide political participation in the U.S.A. and the country of origin (Smith, 1994). However, most of the research addressing the transnational institutions and organizations exclude empirical processes experienced by the transnational migrants during their displacement and settlement in places of residence. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) distinguish between *macro-transnationalism*, the globalization process in multinational governmental and non-governmental organizations, and *micro-transnationalism*, meaning the reality experienced by migrants and their communities when crossing borders.

Situated between the search for empirical evidence and the need to delimit the scope of the theoretical perspective to a defined class of phenomena, the theoretical debate on *transnationalism* has produced conceptual models and typologies to classify and explain the multiple forms of transnationalism. Thus, the contribution of Portes et al. (1999) goes in this direction, which has contributed to defining the features of transnational practices and activities according to an analytical scheme that identifies three areas of action: socio-economic, cultural, and political. However, since a set of critical concepts that flow from the study of the movements, networks, and experiences of transnational actors has emerged, I will add to Portes's et al. (1999) analytical scheme the fourth area of action that resonates with the lived experiences, activities, and practices of *transnational mobile academics*.

The international mobility of students, teachers, and researchers is not a new phenomenon. In particular, since the second half of the 20th century, these movements have been accentuated extensively in societies. However, both the reasons that drove this mobility and the factors that currently increase cross-border academic flow are not precisely the same. Under the

notion of *micro-transnationalism,* there are few studies on the influence of *transnationalism* on immigrants, primarily when it refers to their *transnational academic mobility* (*TAM*) (Kim, 2010) experiences (Vellanki & Prince, 2018).

Since the transnational circulation of students and academics has increased considerably in the post-WWII period, it has intensified international exchanges in higher education and research (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2009; Robertson, 2010). In general terms, *transnational academic mobility* refers to a type of people's corporeal movement across national boundaries that includes temporary stays abroad for research, learning, or teaching. It closely links to other forms of "mobilities central to making and maintaining complex connections in a networked society" (Urry, 2004, p. 28). In other words, *TAM* mostly resembles circular mobility from the home institution to one or several host institutions. Alemu (2020) describes *TAM* as an academic journey across states and is one aspect of the new internationalization of higher education. It presents in terms of the roles of academics in teaching-learning experiences, knowledge production, and transfer. In this context, the mobility of people in academia involves students, teachers, institutions, governments, organizations, and agencies as actors.

From this perspective, the mobility of academics can take the form of academics, researchers, and students traveling across borders of states, institutions, systems, and disciplines. By this means, academic mobility has facilitated collaborative knowledge production, knowledge movement, and publication (Hamza, 2010; Krstić, 2012). Likewise, it develops personal, professional, and international experiences in teaching and research practices (Hamza, 2010; Sandgren et al., 1999) that exceed the immediate individual, institutional and national contexts (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015). For some academics, their mobility is an imperative

experience that leads them to a breakthrough and a paradigm shift in knowledge creation (Altbach, 2007). For example, Hamza (2010) asserts that the exposure of academics to foreign higher education institutions enables them to experience new things as they attempt to interact with local staff and classrooms. As a result, international academics bring home the new knowledge, perspectives, skills, or practices they acquire abroad.

Even though within the last three decades, many scholars have declared a mobility turn or a transnational turn (Goyal, 2017; Urry, 2000) in their fields, the comparative and international education research has occasionally explored various dimensions of *transnational academic mobility* (e.g., Bedenlier, 2018; Schweisfurth, 2012; Streitwieser et al., 2012). Especially from the reality experienced by the individual academic/student transnational migrant who is the central unit of analysis of *transnationalism* (Guarnizo, 2003). Within this context, on the meaning of the *transnationalism* theory and *transnational academic mobility* as a phenomenon that occurs through multiple facets and processes, and as an individual academic migrant, throughout the development of this chapter, I reflect upon my lived experiences as a transnational Latina graduate student/educator on the importance of placing my scholarly experiences, *transnational identity capital* (Kim, 2010*)*, and transnational activities and practices. Besides, I intend to examine and reflect on the significance of my transnational academic trajectory experiences to demonstrate how knowledge production and transfer, professional and academic excellence result from the dynamics between displacement and emplacement in a socio-cultural and academic transnational mobility context.

Since the primary purpose for my international/transnational migration aimed at satisfying two of the *PNBV 2009-2013* objectives, which were: (1) to promote scholarship programs for high-level teacher preparation, and (2) to promote student mobility programs,

mainly at the fourth level, for teachers and researchers at an interregional and international level in search of generating exchange networks and knowledge production, within the concept of transnational academic migrant, my transnational lived experiences refer to an integrated space of two particular places: Azogues (Ecuador) and Manhattan-Kansas (U.S.A.) cities. Thus, my transnational evolutionary journeys through my path of "Conocimiento" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013) flowed through these two spaces, where I had to encounter dual socio-cultural, political, economic, but mainly professional and academic events.

However, at the same time, this continuous geographical movement, which means more than just crossing borders and geographic limits, has led me to maintain direct contact, or sometimes more distant with individuals (friends, colleagues, classmates, professors, researchers) from other places (Mexico, Saudi Arabia, China, Cuba, Venezuela, Spain, Colombia, and more). In one way or another, they have been complementary and emphatic contributors to my understanding of the meaning of being a transnational/international educator-student in transnational spaces. These connections with transnational/international scholars, professionals, students' migrants have encouraged me to think about transnationalism in terms of relations and dimensions, the relations between the individual and the community, socialization and social reproduction, the human being, and the academic structure in different atmospheres.

Envisioning Transnationalism as Theoretical Framework

Educating people to improve their capabilities and competencies through national or international mobility is essential for achieving progress within societies. The literature review presents the importance of understanding and reflecting on the transnational lived experiences of an Ecuadorian student-scholar migrant, who has had the "privilege of crossing borders" with academic purposes, professional development drives, and educational enhancements. There is an

evident gap in the literature and data on individual lived experiences and narratives of South American graduate students and academic professionals who have lived or are living experiences of carrying out transnational activities and endeavors, particularly in Latin American educational research.

By considering Guarnizo's (2003) proposition on the importance of examining migrants' actions and lived experiences at the individual level, this chapter, which is a fragment of my transnational autoethnographic study, unfolds under the theory of *transnationalism* as the theoretical framework. I examine its relationship with my transnational migrant experiences and transnational identity capital within educational settings and processes of *transnational academic mobility* (Jöns, 2011; Kim, 2010). My transnational academic experiences and practices promoted my evolutive and liberal-minded transformations. Moreover, they have been the catalyst to challenge my comfort zone for having the courage and willpower to free my mind, body, and spirit from inherited postcolonial educational practices, conventional academic replications, and "explicitly codified knowledge toward organic, intrinsic, implicit, reflexive, spatialized knowledge-namely embodied and encultured knowledge" (Kim, 2010, p. 589).

As in Ecuador and some other Latin America countries, the meaning of *inclusive and equitable quality education* should develop under the paradigm of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) (Villagómez et al., 2014); within an age of mobility, *transnationalism* offers new insights into the importance of academic-student mobility in favor of *quality educational and professional practices* beyond political and geographic boundaries to theory building.

More specifically, after examining the theoretical considerations of *international migratio*n, *transnationalism, transnational academic mobility,* and *transnational identity capital,* I self-reflect on how my transnational mobility has been possible due to "revolutionary"

groundbreaking government policies and agenda. I also internalize the ways my scholarly self shaped in centers of knowledge production and how my active spirit for the resettlement in the Ecuadorian educational space involved cultivating local and immediate academic practices that I consider the crux of the transnational in my experience.

Understanding Transnationalism Theory Throughout History

Transnational movements and activities, like migrations themselves, do not constitute novel events in the history of humanity. Consequently, many theories have contemplated the analysis and examination of the migratory phenomenon, among which are: the theory of neoclassical economics, the new economics of labor migration, the theory of networks, that of cumulative causality (Abreu, 2012; Bloo, 2001; Galloway, 2013; Lawson, 2013). However, many studies on this subject are currently focusing on the theory of "*transnationalism"* (Faist 2000; Guarnizo 2003; Hiernaux 2007; Portes et al., 1999; Schiller et al., 1992).

As *transnationalism* theory is emerging as an authentic new social phenomenon in recent times, this transnational autoethnography study emphasizes the importance of examining and understanding its development and evolution throughout history.

The term *transnationalism* initially surfaced in a discussion of migration and identity in the United States in 1919, locating its use in a conscious effort to internationalize American politics within the framework of the wider world (Clavin, 2005). However, based on the literature, Randolph Bourne's colleague in college coined the term *transnationalism* and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary indicates that the term "transnational" was first used in print in 1921 after Bourne's death. According to Albrow (1998), the *transnationalism* concept emerged first from the study of international relations as a new term to account for the continued social and physical crossing of boundaries by individuals from different nation-states.

Throughout subsequent decades, in the study of law in the 1950s and books on Anglo-American economic relations in the inter-war period, the still unfamiliar term (*transnationalism)* was primarily employed to extending beyond national bounds or frontiers. Mainly, the *transnationalism* notion dates back to the field of political economy in the 19th century to describe private corporations that already had large financial operations and an organizational and administrative presence in several countries. The growth of these corporations transmitted the power and ownership of capital in more than one country, the conquest of national markets, export, and transfers from the intra-firm market, the employment of workers in another country through branches of the same parent company, and of course, international migration (Moctezuma, 2008). In this sense, the term *transnationalism* came alive inside nation-states and appeared to be used primarily as an alternative view for inter-state relations, or was adopted by multinational corporations that wanted to rebrand themselves as transnational corporations during the 1980s because "multinational had become a dirty word, associated with greed and inequality" (Clavin, 2005, p. 433).

A significant change came in the 1970s when *transnationalism* first became an essential topic of study in the social sciences and was introduced into the academic literature in international relations by Nye & Keohane (1971). While reviewing the different ways that *migration scholars have conceptualized transnationalism*, Kivisto (2001) identifies a third version of *transnationalism* in the publications of political scientist Thomas Faist (see especially Bauböck et al., 2010 and Faist et al., 2013), whom Kivisto attributes as developing the "most rigorously systematic articulation of the term" (Kivisto, 2001, p. 551). In addition, however, observers have highlighted earlier work that documents transnational migratory practices (Schunck, 2014). For instance, Skrbiš (2008) analyzes William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's

(1918) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and American* as the first systematic study of transnational family life ever conducted.

Therefore, while *transnationalism* was considered a new term, in 1976, Susan Strange observed that many of the concepts exposed in the last few years by those interested in pondering it were only rediscoveries of truths apparent to an older generation of writers in international history and international relations. In this decade, Nye and Keohane (1971) published their pioneering work, which defines a transnational relationship as one where at least one of the partners is a non-national actor. As well, their belief that a transnational relationship should embrace more than three states is modified to allow the consideration of historical incidence of bilateral phenomena that offer some claim to universalism, capitalism, socialism, and world peace.

Thus, during the nineties, the concept of transnationalism significantly escalated since the number of non-governmental organizations increased substantially, and new global movements emerged due to their concerns over the environment. As well was a preoccupation with human rights and the breakthrough of the strategic arms limitation agreements (SALT) in the field of international disarmament in 1972, the same year international terrorism gained a new prominence at the Munich Olympic Games (Clavin, 2005). From a European perspective, it is also possible to observe by 1970 the decline of some transnational networks in favor of others, notably the end of European empires and the switch from extra-European migration to inter-European migration, a change partly fostered by the rise of the European Economic Community.

On the other hand, in the 1980s, *transnationalism* became associated with the world of historians seeking to break free from dominant national paradigms. Clavin (2005) observes that historians of the world, in particular, took *transnationalism* in new directions. They were

interested in extracting transnational elements such as trade networks, international investment, immigration, slavery, disease, and health care, rightly arguing that these developments are of interest in their own right as global historical developments. Nevertheless, while they recognize that these trends are essential components of national histories, the nation rarely appears as a category of analysis in world history (Clavin, 2005). Instead, *the term transnational networks* in world history refer to ties and networks that seem to float free from the nation-state.

In this context, *transnationalism* theory emerged to a large extent as a product of the unsatisfactory nature of the predominant theories in migration studies until the eighties, since they placed an excessive emphasis on the economic aspects and on the fact that after a couple of generations, it was heading inexorably towards assimilation into the host society. It is so that the origins of this perspective traced to the work published by Nina Glick Schiller et al. (1992), who had been researching Central American migrants in New York. In their work, the researchers emphasized cultural aspects and how migrants, far from invariably assimilating themselves to the host society, maintained economic, political, and social relations with their places of origin. At the center of this idea of new relationships that are established *here* and *there* lies the proposal that these come to constitute transnational communities.

This impression served as a starting point for the vast and diverse bibliography that has rapidly formed *transnationalism* theory and something Portes (2000) defines as a mid-range theory of social interaction. However, Schiller and her colleagues' work published in 1992 was not new in more ways than one since certain notions aimed to analyze the migration phenomena associated with the culture field. This analysis can be seen most clearly in Rouse's work published in late 1989. When studying migration between Aguililla, in Michoacán, Mexico, and Redwood City, in California, United States, he addressed particular interest in the established

flows, whether of people, symbolic exchanges, or material goods. Hence, next, Rouse proposes his idea of a transnational migratory circuit for these years, highlighting the spatial aspects of *transnationalism.*

Since then, the transnational turn in migration studies, which began in the early 1990s, has been the subject of vigorous debate by migration scholars. Terms such as *transnationalism, transnational, transmigrant,* and *transnationality* have become controversial as theorists discuss and develop different strands of the literature. For Munro (2015), the transnational paradigm has been enthusiastically embraced by those from various disciplines seeking a conceptual framework to place empirical findings that illustrate the multiple and intense cross-border economic connections between migrants and their countries of origin. Thus, several thematic fields on *transnationalism* have developed within the literature, including transnational economic ties (Djelic & Quack, 2010; Guarnizo, 2003; Portes, 1996; Sana, 2005;), political (Bordes-Benayoun, 2010; Guarnizo et al.; 2003; Lafleur, 2013; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003), cultural (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996; Jackson et al., 2004; Kennedy & Roudometof, 2003; Rowe et al., 2018), or social (Bradatan et al., 2010; Faist, 2000; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2001; Vertovec, 2003). Within the more general field of transnationalism, more specialized and focused subfields of study have also grown and developed, for example, on gender, transnational families, and parenting (Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Carling et al., 2012; Oso & Ribas-Mateos, 2013; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Salih, 2003), community transnational practices (Batahla & Carling, 2008; Bruneau, 2010; Riccio, 2001; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) and subsets of the main themes; for instance, citizenship within the transnational political literature (Kivisto, 2001).

As the transnational perspective originates in the global north in the late 20th century within political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology (Appadurai, 1990; Basch et al.

1994; Hannerz & Hannerz, 1996; Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Levitt, DeWind & Vertovec 2003; Massey & Durand, 1990), the interpretive twists in the transnational perspective distanced themselves from the approach proposed by scholars such as Toffler (1979) or McLuhan and Power (1989) on globalization. These discussions opened an eventual reflection on the sovereignties, territories, and citizenships demanded by communities in their political border crossings and global assemblages (Appadurai, 1996; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Ong & Collier 2008; Sassen, 2001). The debates bounded from the perspective of globalization, and the transnational was, in a way, more suitable for phenomena that did not occur within the same State but over long distances and prioritized cultural connections between places and people. Moreover, thus starting, in the early 1990s, relevant conceptual discussions and proposals emerged such as *transnational communities* (Kearney, 1989), *transnational migratory circuits* (Rouse 1992), *transnational social fields* (Basch et al., 1994), *translocality* (Appadurai, 1996), *transnational social spaces* (Pries 1999), *migratory chains* (Faist, 2000), *transnational academic mobility* (Jöns, 2011; Kim, 2010) among others.

In recent decades, one of the most relevant concepts has been *transnational social fields* proposed by Basch et al. in the mid-1990s, which refers to long-distance connections, immediacy, simultaneity, and participation in networks and interacting circuits. The particularities that distinguish these social fields lie in understanding how migrants incorporated themselves into the countries of residence and how their ties reach their places of origin, influenced by the continuous ties between their countries and the social networks built and spread further beyond national borders. To better understand the contemporary migration processes, Basch et al. argue it is pertinent to think about the impacts caused by networks in cultural, economic, and political terms, both in places of origin and in those of settlement.

That is why nowadays, an exhaustive bibliography on transnational theory contributes to the production of new theoretical knowledge that questions and rethinks the classic conceptualizations about the nation-state while incorporating the discussion on the subjectivities that emerge from collective displacements, also made visible in the circulation of cultural, religious, ethnic meanings, and identity (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Therefore, the transnational perspective has become a vital debate subject within various disciplines. However, despite the accelerated development of these debates, the reflections are far from forming a unified theory. It is why an infinity of tensions and conflicts regarding the concept of transnationalism and its dimensions is evident, some of which will be present in this chapter. However, I will begin by referring to the everyday things that unify those who participate in this debate, that is, those features that give an idea of the substance of this theory. The clearest coincidence stems from recognizing that although transnational practices are not new, that is, that there have always been flows and interconnections across the planet, the novelty would be this ability of a transnational theory to provide a new lens to observe migratory phenomena and their dimension in societies.

Perspectives and Scopes on the Meaning of Transnationalism

Although transnationalism arose and developed in the social sciences field, mainly in studies of international emigration, its explanatory force of social dynamics has nevertheless permeated other fields of study. Transnationalism has multiple meanings that demarcate different perspectives and indicate various research areas such as social relations that cross borders, networks, flows of people, ideas and information, and diasporas. Also, reproduction of cultural processes on a global scale, reconfiguration and expansion of capital on a world level, and social movements that articulate the local and global in what is called the *transnational social space* (Faist, 2000; Mcllwaine, 2012; Pries, 2001; Tarrow, 2005). Evidently, during the last

decade of the 20th century, the term *transnationalism* and its transnational derivations have been used liberally. However, even though several disciplines have used the concept to explain the dynamics of migrants, the term transnational has not always been founded adequately within the research arena. Since *transnationalism* does not have a fixed and final definition, experts in cultural and religious studies, migration, political science, sociology, and anthropology have framed *transnationalism* distinctly depending on the contexts and situations.

As definitions of *transnationalism* vary, however, in a more general context, it refers to economic and social activities, organizations, ideas, identities, and relationships that frequently cross and transcend national boundaries (Levitt, 2001; Portes et al., 1999). This general definition creates a problem of multidimensional levels of analysis for studies investigating the *transnationalism* phenomenon in several academic areas. As previously stated, Smith and Guarnizo (2001) distinguish between *macro-transnationalism*, which refers to the globalization process in multinational governmental and non-governmental organizations, and *micro-transnationalism*, meaning the reality experienced by migrants and their communities that cross borders. Under the definition of micro-transnationalism, Portes et al. (1999) include quantitative and chronological dimensions, explaining that the volume of cross-border activities and individuals must be significant and continuous to designate them as transnational. Nevertheless, this does not precisely define how high the capacity should be or how long it should take for an individual or activity to be considered transnational (Al-Ali et al., 2002).

According to Levitt (2001), it is vital to understand the social context in which the *transnationalism* phenomenon emerges. Moreover, social groups, identities, beliefs, rituals, practices, and power relations in communities of origin and destination are critical factors for understanding the process and effects of *transnationalism*. A classic work by Schiller et al.

(1992) defines *transnationalism* "as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link their country of origin with that of settlement" (p. 1), and *transmigrants* are those emigrants who build these social fields by maintaining multiple relationships (family, economic, political, cultural, so forth) that contribute to widening and uniting borders. Thus, *transnationalism* attempts to account for all the phenomena that have been unexplained or generated new approaches in the migration theories.

These same phenomena have not been integrated or explained by broader theories, including *Wallerstein's world system theory* (Chirot & Hall, 1982), which focuses excessively on economic processes in which migrants are understood fundamentally as a workforce within a labor market world. Likewise, the world system theory ignores the political, military, legal, and ideological processes impacting and creating new forms of existence for nations.

By considering the importance of the social context in which the phenomenon of transnationalism occurs, Faist (2000; 2001) has conceptualized the *transnational social spaces* as "the prolonged combination of social and symbolic ties sustained, their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations found in numerous States" (Faist, 2000, p. 199). In this sense, *transnational social spaces* are made up of people and groups that can be mobile or immobile under their norms, objectives, and actions, and additionally, by state and extra-state norms that frame global flows. Besides, the *transnational social space* is not a space of flows and immutable time (Castells, 1999) controlled by elites. However, it instead refers to the specific practice of social groups, rooted in places and whose ties or connections, apart from contributing to the formation of the *transnational social space* itself, are not fixed by the advances of the means of communication and transportation because access to them depends on the resources of the social agent and its choices.

However, groups that make up a particular *transnational social space* require a series of links of exchange, solidarity, and reciprocity that allow them great social cohesion in constructing a set of symbols and collective representations (Faist, 2000). In this context, *transnationalism* means a circuit or social field, made up of relationships established between the societies of origin and settlement, which reconfigures the daily life of migrants, their work, gender and class identity, relations with public and private space, and its codes and social symbols, among others. This phenomenon generates different ways of perceiving and relating to the world, that instead of being synthesized, creates a bifocality composed of relationships established between the old dispositions, distinctive of their society of origin, and the demands of the new society (Rouse, 1992, pp. 41-42).

Concerning migration, being connected to several places simultaneously or not being *here* or *there* has always been a characteristic that defines the experience of being a transmigrant. Living transnational lives in multiple sites means that cross-border exchanges and interactions are a regular and sustained part of the realities and activities of migrants. These exchanges may well be of ideas, values, practices, political mobilization, and economic contributions. In this sense, transnationalism de-emphasizes the role of geography in the formation of collective identity, recreates membership crossing territorial borders, and emphasizes the ability to maintain and generate relationships and ties due to migration (Levitt, 2001). Thus, the transnational interaction and connectedness do not only engender transnational individuals who are border-crossers endowed with complex histories of movement and hybridity but also create and foster transnational physical and virtual spaces characterized by deterritorialization, liminality, and complexity across language use, cultures, communities, practices, voices, and identities (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2002; Canagarajah, 2018).

As well "socially constructed and affectively experienced" (Canagarajah, 2018, p. 42), transnational spaces could involve many types of social actors, resources, institutions, and formal or informal networks (e.g., family, religious, business, political, educational, recreational, ideological) (Duff, 2015). Furthermore, every aspect of immigrants' lives and their associative activities can have transnational implications (Martiniello & Lafleur, 2008). For instance, Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003) points out how the development of transnationalism endows immigrants with sociopolitical capital to influence policies in the place of origin. That capital is also present in the place of residence policy, where "the local dimensions of citizenship imply the incorporation of stakeholders in the local decision-making process, policy formulation, and its implementation through governance processes" (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2011, p. 24). Likewise, Siemiatycki (2011) explains that through *transnationalism*, immigrants participate in local politics to determine the rules by which they will live and the obligations that individuals have with society. In this regard, Ginieniewicz (2010) affirms that although immigrants suddenly arrive in a world where rules, laws, codes, and references differ from those they know, the migratory experience includes learning civic practices and membership rules of the place of settlement.

Thus, the politicization process is the multiplicity of new forms of social relations intrinsically linked to the advancement of new technologies, transportation systems, and communications. Consequently, the new perspective of *transnationalism* offers a new perspective that makes visible the increasing intensity and extension of the circular flows of people, goods, information, and symbols reached by international migrations. Moreover, it allows us to analyze how migrants build and rebuild their lives simultaneously in more than one society (Caglar, 2001).

In the same way, the anthropologists Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc (1992), have indicated that the emergence of *transnational social spaces* that unite the societies of origin and destination of migrants represent a break with the past. The disconnection with the origin is no longer necessary; instead, in the contemporary world, *transmigrants* maintain, build, and reinforce multiple ties that unite them to their places of origin, thus generating natural *deterritorialized communities*. So then, transnationalism would be the set of activities created by transnational migrants that allow them to live simultaneously in two differentiated communities. Moreover, *transmigrants are* immigrants who daily depend on the multiple and constant interconnections across national borders and whose identities develop within more than one nation-state (Schiller et al., 1995).

According to the analysts of *transnationalism*, to the extent that the concept ran counter to traditional American assimilation models, *transnationalism* drew intense criticism from many social scientists (Mahler, 2017; Portes, et al., 2008). Therefore, encountered with these reactions, some researchers, who assumed *transnationalism* as a new emerging social reality, decided to limit the concept better. Thus, Portes et al. (1999) indicated that it was preferable to limit the concept to occupations and activities that require regular social and sustained contacts over time across national borders. Then transnational migrants would be those bilingual people who move quickly between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political, cultural, and (academic) interests that require their presence in both (Portes, 1996). Furthermore, although migratory movements constitute the fundamental basis of transnationalism, migration is not synonymous with transnationalism. The latter is a phenomenon that accompanies a particular way of migrating that is not necessarily universal, not even today.

Not all migrants are *transmigrants*; only those who maintain close relationships between origin and destination are so, thereby presenting a marked dualization or bipolarization of their lives. For this reason, the fact that migrants sent remittances to their families at origin or trips occur to the place of origin does not, in itself, constitute a trait of transnationalism. Instead, it means that regularity and maintenance of transnational activities are required to have real effects on migrant subjects and their societies of origin and destination, thus generating natural transnational communities. In this context, the activities carried out by immigrants between their places of origin and destination (economic, political, cultural, communicative, financial, educational, and more.) acquire a transnational character in the strict sense when they are regular and systematic, generating a proper interactive channel between both places: the transnational space.

According to some experts, the transnational space does not constitute a territorialized and concrete physical space, and it is precisely deterritorialization that characterizes current transnational communities (Pries, 2001; Schiller et al., 1995). Others consider that the deterritorialization of transnational activities constitutes an unreal myth. Therefore, transnational spaces happen in specific territories formed by the localities or countries of origin and those of destination that link transnational networks. Although transnational practices extend beyond two or three national territories, Smith and Guarnizo (1998) observe that they build within the limits of specific social, economic, and political relationships, which hold everyone together by shared interests and meanings. However, both versions of the territorialization of transnational spaces may be compatible, depending on the meaning given to *space* (territorial or social). If the transnational space means as the quasi-physical support through which goods, capital, votes, communications, and people transit, then it belongs to specific local areas and, indeed, would be

subject to norms, limitations, and possibilities that the societies of origin and destination have established for themselves. It is about a conceptualization of space as practical support for relationships and activities within precise territorial limits (Bauböck & Faist, 2010).

Nevertheless, the most practical perception often does not take into account other dimensions of space. One of them is the *symbolic* dimension that practical relationships between people and places acquire, establishing ties of identity, affection, recognition, and solidarity (de Valderrama, 2007). This more social approach is present in Faist's (1999) definition of transnational social spaces, which signify the combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct locations. As a whole, it denotes territorial spaces through which goods, symbols, votes, capital, social relations cross, forming actual networks that link migrants with their communities of origin and their places of settlement, making possible the generation of transnational social spaces. On this basis, transnational spaces are no longer located in a specific territorial area and not bound by national borders until reaching the local level. Instead, it is a whole new and diverse spatial configuration with at least two reference sites among which a varied set of interrelationships, exchanges, and interactions occur between origins and destinations, and where the same immigrants occupy both positions simultaneously, living different roles and in parallel to their respective activities.

On the dimensions of *transnationalism*, an important aspect to consider within transnational social spaces is the diversity of activities that develop within the transnational scope. Portes and collaborators (1999) carry out the first *typology of transnational activities* based on two dimensions: first, the sector in which they frame and their level of institutionalization, and second, it refers to the type of actor that carries out the transnational

activity (de Valderrama, 2007). According to Portes et al. (1999), there are three main types of transnationalism rendering to the sector of transnational activity: political, economic, and socio-cultural transnationalism.

On one side are the economic activities of transnational entrepreneurs, who mobilize their contacts across borders in search of suppliers, capital, and markets. On the other hand, there are the political activities of official parties, government officials, or community leaders whose objectives are to achieve political power and influence in the countries of origin, destination, or both. Finally, a third, broader category of activities includes multiple socio-cultural initiatives whose main objective is to reinforce national identity abroad.

The second dimension, whose consideration is usually beneficial for operationalizing the phenomenon and its empirical analysis, refers to the *type of actor* that carries out the transnational activity. For example, it may be an institutionally influential actor (states and multinational corporations) or initiatives carried out by immigrants themselves and their compatriots in origin. Smith and Guarnizo (1998) treat this dimension as transnationalism *from above* and *below,* depending on the actor leading it. Transnational activities *from above* are prevalent in today's world, and they conceptualize home country policies that channel the transnational activities of migrants (Itzigsohn, 2000; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Smith & Guarnizo 1998). While those carried out *from below* conceptualize migrant practices relating to their country of origin in economic, cultural, and political terms (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Portes 1999). In other words, *transnationalism from above* pays attention to the dynamics at the macro level of the society (e.g., financial markets, transnational corporations, or labor movements). In contrast, *transnationalism from below* refers to human collectivities, where individuals engage in

activities that cross boundaries and create social spaces that overlap boundaries between different nation-states.

These two forms of *transnationalism* co-exist in an interdependent relationship. While some transnational activities at the human collectivity level are the product of the reconfiguration of macro-systems such as transnational corporations, advances in technology, and labor markets; some of the human collectivities' activities also create reactions in nation-state governments, labor markets, and more (Brittain, 2002). This recognition of dual-sourcing on transnational activities (nation-states and human collectivities) has given rise to distinguish between transnationalism from *above* and *below.* Then transnational activities *from below* are meant to be the essential object of study by researchers of transnationalism, precisely because of their unawareness and their future consequences within transnational societies. Besides, the majority of scholars have agreed that transnationalism is *from below* and concerns civil society and individuals and their formal-informal activities (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Vertovec, 2009). In Al-Ali et al.'s (2001) words, transnationalism from below is a "people-led process that exploits the economic and political opportunities presented by globalization and challenges the centralizing tendencies of nationalism" (pp. 578-579).

When referring to individuals engaging in transnational formal or informal activities, Vertovec (2003) manifests that grassroots resources and private citizens are regularly involved in transnational activities, affecting people's sense of belonging, loyalty, and sense of attachment. As a result, they become multi-local: found and retained in more than one locality (Klingenberg et al., 2021). Alongside, Vertovec (2009) explains that *transnationalism* is grounded in six theoretical premises:

1. Social morphology (social networks spanning borders)

2. Type of consciousness (multiple identities and sense of belonging)
3. Mode of cultural reproduction (hybridization of various cultural phenomena)
4. Avenue of capital (activities of transnational corporations)
5. Site of political engagement (cross-border public participation and political organization through technologies)
6. (Re)construction of 'place' or locality (creation of new social spaces across countries) (p. 4)

Furthermore, meaningful and constant cross-borders relationships and activities connect all these aspects, which are "inherently transformative, relevant, and widespread enough to bring about societal structural change" (Tedeschi et al., 2020, p. 4). Indeed, they may contribute significantly to broadening, deepening, or intensifying conjoined processes of transformation that are already ongoing (Vertovec 2009).

In this sense, "transnationalism has reconstructed localities, regrouping, due to the mobility of both people and ideas, the practices and meanings derived from multiple geographical and historical points of origin" (Rizvi, 2019, p. 277). It has happened because of the greater "extensiveness, intensity and velocity of networked flows of information and resources" (Vertovec, 2004, p. 972); thus, being inherently in-becoming, transnationalism is transformative, powerful enough to trigger societal changes. It is transnationalism itself and its transformative nature that challenges dual categories (integration vs. transnationalism; transnational vs. non-transnational) and distinctions, pushing forward and challenging their limits and rooting them in the actual practices and activities of cross-border individuals (Tedeschi et al., 2020, pp. 4-5).

Indeed, throughout history, there have been critical transnational practices and activities carried out across borders, but according to Portes (1999), these activities have lacked the regularity, routine, and critical mass that characterize contemporary examples of transnationalism. Even though transnational activities are not considered novel events, based on the prior existence of clear examples of transnational communities in historical times, Portes et al. (1999) maintain the idea that *transnationalism* constitutes a new field of social research. It justifies its consideration as a new research topic and the high intensity of exchanges, new modes of transaction, and the multiplication of activities that require trips and contacts across national borders in a sustained way over time. Technological advances and globalization have enabled the multiplication of circular travel, virtual connectivity between people across national borders, and the carrying out of commercial, political, and cultural activities above current border limits at levels before never known. The globalization process, in which transnationalism advances, reflects the emergence of interregional networks and systems of interaction and exchange (Doña, 2004). Thus, the scope and density of its global and transnational interconnectivity build complex networks of relationships between communities, states, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations that constitute the world order.

Under the notion that cross-borders relationships and transnational activities are inherently transformative, relevant, and widespread enough to bring about societal structural change, for this study, it is necessary to examine and reflect on the *transnational academic mobility* and international academic links as transnational activities that have become more visible, systematic, solid, multiple and transnational, especially within the United States and Latin America educational systems.

Exploring the Significance of Transnational Academic Mobility

Academic mobility has existed since ancient times, but it has become more systemic (Kim, 2007, 2009) given the rise of academic capitalism (Cantwell & Kauppinen, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and the continuing expansion of higher education. As a crucial part of the global transfer and production of knowledge, academics have become critical to governments and universities that compete internationally. However, cross-border mobility and migration expose academics to new contexts that can lead to new knowledge creation (Kim 2007, 2009, 2010) and facilitate collaborative knowledge production, knowledge movement, and publication (Hamza, 2010; Krstic, 2012). Likewise, academic mobility develops personal, professional, and international experiences in teaching and research (Hamza, 2010; Sandgren et al., 1999), experiences that exceed the immediate individual, institutional, and national contexts (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015). In this sense, mobility of academics can take the form of academics, researchers, and students traveling across borders of states, institutions, systems, and disciplines.

In general terms, *transnational academic mobility* is understood as the academic travel across borders of states, which is one aspect of the new internationalization of higher education, and presented in terms of the roles of academics in teaching-learning experiences as well as knowledge production and transfer (Alemu, 2020). In the twenty-first century, the transnational circulation of students and academics has increased considerably due to changes in higher education and the academic profession and the intensification of international competition between universities for skilled researchers and revenue (Alemu, 2020). Recent studies have shown that academic mobility can generate significant positive feedback effects for traveling and hosting academics and their students, research groups, and institutions. These studies are some illustrations of the production of new knowledge, the international transfer of existing

knowledge, the mobilization of innovative resources for research and teaching, a regular exchange of students and academics, and the establishment of long-term research collaborations (e.g., Ackers 2005; Ackers & Gill 2008; Altbach 1989; Blumenthal, 1996; Enders & Teichler, 2005; Jöns, 2007; Kenway & Fahey, 2009; Welch 1997).

For Kim (2017), the current highly skewed process of academic knowledge production and extremely competitive up-or-out nature of academic career development has become more tied to neoliberal performativity regimes (Ball, 2012; Shore & Wright, 1999), and mobile academics more accurately experience this crossing both international and academic cultural boundaries. In this way, international experience can serve as a distinct form of capital for transnational mobile academic career development (Bauder et al., 2017).

Thus, academics' crossing of international borders has intensified because governments and institutions are interested in coordinating and accelerating knowledge production and academic excellence. For Nunn (2005), the flows of academic mobilities are strong, now, and conditioned by some apparent factors and forces, including neoliberal market principles, filtered through the globalization of corporate university governance and management, and the continuing brain drain/brain gain policy discourse at both international and regional levels. However, Kim (2009) declares that contemporary academic mobility differs from past patterns due to the simultaneity of interlocking relations of the spontaneity of mobile individuals. And the "national and supranational policy frameworks, and institutional networks of universities in the global cyberspace of knowledge flows" (p. 400). In this perspective, *transnational academic mobility* has affected academics and the profession on the individual, institutional or global levels, and internationally mobile migrant academics have attained new kinds of opportunities to build their professional careers.

For some academics, their mobility is an imperative experience that leads them to a breakthrough and a paradigm shift in knowledge creation (Altbach, 2007). Moreover, it is evident that researchers (scholars, teachers, and students) who show a high level of mobility are exposed to different schools of thought and may therefore be more likely to pursue new and unexplored research topics with better research productivity, efficiency, and quality than immobile academics or less mobile academics (Hopkins, 2013). Besides, since "the borderlines between short-term mobility, circular mobility, transnational lifestyles, and migration are fluctuating" (Scheibelhofer, 2008, p. 123), a variety of knowledge nodes may eventually benefit from contacts and resources mobilized through research or academic preparation stays abroad.

Therefore, *transnational academic mobility* has become more visible due to the different forms of increased competition between research projects and institutions for international recruitments of students and staff, technological innovation policies, and individual academics' career development strategies (Kim, 2009). Besides, those academics who participate in *transnational academic mobility* are systematically advantaged since they can benefit range of opportunities, including the "recruitment of new and unexpected resources for their research and teaching; the validation of their knowledge claims in different academic contexts; the dissemination of their research findings to an international audience; and the establishment or deepening of professional contacts" (Latour, 1987, p. 210). All these activities may be useful for the researchers' work and professional careers and may also generate positive feedback effects for their students, research groups, and institutions.

An important consideration from Bourdieu's (1986) perspective is that traveling researchers [transnational academics] can exchange and accumulate different forms of capital, which are "determining the chances of success for practices" (p. 242). They can have access to

further capital, including prestige (symbolic capital), education and knowledge (embodied cultural capital), books and research infrastructure (objectified cultural capital), academic credentials and qualifications (institutionalized cultural capital), a network of relationships (social capital), and economic capital that is directly convertible into money (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). However, it is essential to recognize that academics do not move for purely economic reasons, and on this, Bauder (2015) suggests that academic migration needs to be categorized differently from ordinary economic migration.

Concerning this, Kim (2010) argues that *transnational academic mobility* and migration are more often shaped by the "intellectual centre/periphery relationships rather than merely directed by pure economic incentives" (p. 588). As well, lifestyle incentives, including diversity, community, identity, and vibe, are considered far more critical than economic incentives/employment opportunities (Florida, 2014). With rich experiences in different cultures and intellectual behaviors, with knowledge acquired from both origin and settlement societies, transnational academics are a significant asset in an era of intensified globalization and thus deserve special consideration at institutional, national, and international levels. Another important characteristic of academic mobility is that its direction is significantly vertical, which matures from less developed high educational institutions (HEIs)/states (periphery) to developed states (centres) (Kim, 2010). In other words, the mobility of academics is mainly from peripheries (less developed and equipped HEIs) to centres (well-developed and equipped HEIs). With varying degrees of involvement, most nations experience both an inflow and outflow of researchers and academics.

Regarding the type of mobile academics and university structures, Kim (2010) discusses the various form of knowledge denoted in three kinds of mobile academics who are emerging

within the new flood of transnational academic mobility being framed by economic globalization and conditioned by the imperatives of neoliberal market-framed higher education systems (Kim, 2008). These three kinds of mobile academics are: (1) *academic intellectuals*, whose creative role is to engage as legislator and interpreter contributing to creative destruction and reconstruction of the paradigms of academic work; (2) *academic experts,* many of whom increasingly define their roles as researchers with transferable methodological research skills; and (3) *manager-academics*, many of whom have assumed their role as general managers with transferable management skills rather than traditional academic leadership (Kim, 2010). Although academics have always been mobile as they moved among educational institutions in previous historical periods, Kim (2010) observes that new patterns of mobility overlap with and construct through the characteristics of contemporary entrepreneurial research universities:

> (1) A new division of academic labor: research versus teaching versus management; (2) severe competition for external research funding and international recruitment of research staff (and students); (3) casualization of academic labor in short-term, fixed-term contract-based staffing; (4) implementation of immigration policies favorable to international students and highly skilled foreign knowledge workers; and (5) changing styles of university leadership in governance and management (Kim, 2010, p. 579).

These characteristics are visible in many neoliberal market-led economies worldwide, but especially strong among the English-speaking higher education export countries such as the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the USA (Kim, 2010). However, since the structure of *transnational academic mobility* has been through political and economic forces determining the boundaries and direction of flows, it also involves personal choices and professional

networks (Kim, 2008). Moreover, the patterns of *transnational academic mobility* in history are discontinuous as the barriers of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion, culture, and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion amend. Still, equal opportunities for participating in *transnational academic mobility* are crucial for ensuring scientific excellence and efficiency, the latter meaning that the skills of trained researchers (academics) are not only used in employment but also potentially enhanced through the experience of other research and teaching contexts (Ackers et al., 2008).

In this sense, Kim (2017) explains academic mobility as an ontological condition and how the socio-spatial transfer of knowledge follows the transformation into transnational capital. He argues that migrants who possess *transnational identity capital* can be a vital catalyst to generate new knowledge. Moreover, through the displacement process, they can contribute to creative destruction and reconstruction of the paradigms of academic work (Kim, 2017). It can occur because *transnational identity capital* formation is itself "the process of shifting from hard, scientific, explicitly codified knowledge to organic, intrinsic, implicit, reflexive, spatialized knowledge-namely embodied and encultured knowledge" (Kim, 2010, p. 589). He also argues that although the experiences of mobile academics would differ qualitatively (depending on where they stand at the intersection of multiple forms of "otherness"), transnational mobile academics, regardless of their gender and ethnic, national, and social class backgrounds, tend to have divergent and implicitly expansionist orientation and epistemic paradigms. This orientation is "a reflexive; it is an in-between stance, and it hints at forms of the "objectivity" of an outsider" (Kim, 2017, p. 994). That is why a new transnational academic territory is emerging and becoming more visible, and it has some crucial implications of the "minority-majority shift" (Kim, 2017, p. 994) in the domain of knowledge creation.

In this context, when theorizing mobilities, Urry (2016) argued a minimization of the significance and consequences of embodied experiences of academic movement. For instance, in higher education studies, extensive literature exists on student mobility in the global academy (e.g., Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011; Brooks, 2018; Guruz, 2011; Krzaklewska, 2008). However, fewer studies explore mobility and opportunity structures concerning academics (Ackers et al 2008; Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015; Bönisch-Brednich, 2016; Cai & Hall, 2016; Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Kim, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2017; Kim & Locke, 2010). Thus, to reflect upon positions within a transnational/international space, explore complex academic experiences, and education as a mobility providing mean, Kim et al., (2010) and ECU (2014) call for qualitative studies to uncover *stories* behind the sparse statistics.

Existing studies on transnational/international academic mobility suggest that no universal model characterizes how academic mobility is experienced or performed by the transnational/international academic. It is why the analysis and exploration of some "biographies of transnational academic intellectuals corroborate the proposition that highly mobile academics develop a sense of multi-belongings through the constant voluntary and involuntary displacement experiences" (Tim, 2010, p. 585). Thus, for mobile academics who become transnational talent and opt for international academic career development, their academics embodied and encultured knowledge would go through a transformation in the course of mobility, and some of them would develop *transnational identity capital*.

Tim (2010) also argues that mobile academic intellectuals living such transnational lives cannot inhabit an immutable nation-home once they become cosmopolitan. Even when they "reside in their own home countries, they are never quite at home again, in the way real locals can be" (Hannerz, 1990, p. 248). However, not all mobile academics would become

cosmopolitan and possess transitional identity capital since it requires active engagement with otherness and involves creative abilities that convert challenges and insights into innovation processes and new forms of expression (Kim, 2010, pp. 585-586). That is why it is significant to cross-examine with more detailed examples of transnational academic intellectuals whose stories reveal their possession of *transnational identity capital*.

Likewise, it would be helpful to explore the opportunities and barriers of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion, and culture and the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion manifest in the real-life experiences of transnational mobile academics and international students. Besides, Kim (2010) suggests that it would be essential to ask about the internal sociology and cultural assumptions of daily practice inside academe and the intricate relations between these and the institutional contexts of policy implementation; for instance, the interactions between local students and international academics and the interactions between international academics and international students.

In the literature, there are significant questions on the creation of new identities, processes of transnational academic mobility, and new university cultures and visions of interculturality (Kim, 2009; Oso et al., 2013). That is why it is pivotal to analyze and reflect on current transnational/international academics' narratives to understand better the socio-professional networks of transnational academics and their embodied spatial knowledge, which are not yet seriously analyzed empirically (Kim, 2009; 2010). Within this perception that new transnational identities are under development, and more academics are becoming transnational deciding for international academic career development, it is significant for this transnational autoethnographic study to examine and reflect on individual accounts and narratives of mobile academics. Such autoethnography studies open avenues for exploring the multiplicity of

transnational academic experiences, relations, hybrid identities, and "brain transfer and transformation in a globalized space" (Kim, 2009b, p. 401), where critical theoretical questions and new discourse would emerge for better understanding and consideration of the meaning of transnational identities and positionalities within the academia world.

Unfolding Transnational Experiences in Academia Contexts through Autoethnographic Accounts

An autoethnography study is “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001, p. 710). It provides the opportunity to deepen cultural understandings of self and others and has the “potential to transform self and others toward cross-cultural coalition building” (Chang, 2007, p. 213). For autoethnographers, “autoethnography narratives is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively” (Jones, 2016, p. 9). Since autoethnography not only helps autoethnographers examine their lives but also consider how and why they think, act, and feel as they do, for this study, I have contemplated the importance of exploring and reflecting on particular autoethnography studies grounded on transnational/international academic experiences. It will contribute to the understanding of discourses surrounding the ambiguities contested and intersecting notions of education, social and cultural differences, and identities within the spaces of transnationalism.

I’m From Foreign, an autoethnographic account from Sara Chugani Molina (2020), traces her history and critical incidents, or *shipwreck-moments* (Parks, 2000), where she confronts and reflects on her transnational identity (ethno) as a transnational language teacher and ESOL educator through a systematic analysis (graphy) of her personal experiences (auto) (Ellis et al., 2011). As an Indian national, born and raised in Japan, and having attended an

American international school, she reflects on her transnational identity experiences and provides a space for authentic and honest reflection on her understanding as a transnational person herself, language teacher, teacher educator, and researcher.

Where I'm from? Sara often questioned herself since she identified with none and all of the cultures at the same time as McCaig (1994) defines third-culture kids as people who have grown up in a host culture but identify with neither their home nor the host culture, often creating a uniquely their own culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). It was essential to define her identity as a transnational language teacher and teacher educator because her students wanted to place her in some speech or cultural community.

However, by minding Canagarajah's (2018) definition of "transnational" as a space that transcends nation-states, where they do not bind our "relationships, experiences, and affiliations" (p. 42), her transnational positioning was indeed a lonesome space, where she continued to long for belonging. She reveals a voice within her silenced voice because it was too hard to explain where she is from, as she genuinely belongs nowhere. She also describes her iterative attempts to reconstruct her language teacher identity as a transnational language teacher and how this influenced her instructional practice and her relationships with her students.

Reflecting on Makris's (2018) notion, there is a need to push beyond *compartmentalized identity qualifiers* to one that has multiple layers of identity, which she defines as "an accommodation of the complexity of interacting, shifting, and overlapping characteristics and the ways they morph according to circumstance" (p. 1). Sara manifests that with more and more people living within these unique transnationals and transcultural spaces, we must come to value the "superdiversity and individual's contextualized accounts of being and becoming" (Selvi, 2018, p. v). Thus, instead of living in the shadows by simply dismissing her transnational

identity with the phrase *I'm from foreign*, she felt empowered to share her background as she uncovered more literature and dug herself into academic work. It allowed her to tell and acknowledge her story by considering her transnational liminal space as an asset rather than a liability.

Something to reflect on Sara's autoethnography work is that because she was trying hard to fit in within the field, revealing only those parts of her identity that others may recognize, she felt failing without allowing her students to be their whole selves because she, herself, was not willing to shed the frame and expose her vulnerability. Thus, as a teacher educator, she realized that it was imperative for her to first explicitly engage in the process of deconstructing and reconstructing her identity and history as she considered her transcultural experience, which in Motha et al.'s (2012) words mean a "rich and fertile soil for knowledge generation within language teaching" (p. 25). When Sara reenacted her identity, she could attend to her role as a teacher educator to draw forth and connect with her teacher candidates' identity, positionality, and lived experiences as future language teachers and teacher educators.

By identifying myself as a transnational educator, it is significant to recognize how Molina's pedagogical practice and research help deconstruct various intersections of her identity and see these pieces for what they are. This process served her as both a healing and empowering experience. She declares that now she begins each class session with a question about *Where am I from? With this, she* engages students in challenging their assumptions and recognizing their sense of belonging and identity. She exposes her stories of vulnerability to her language learners and her teacher candidates, particularly those who perceive themselves as "non-native" speakers, from an authentic space. It is a space where perceived barriers between herself and her students are lower due to their mutual sharing of their lived experiences. Through this process, she finds

that they breathe and feel less hesitant to expose their vulnerabilities as they navigate their identity as language learners and as future language teachers in this increasingly transnational world.

Following this reflecting path on transnational experiences within the academic sphere, Solano-Campos (2014) shares her story as a Costa Rican language teaching professional recruited to work in the United States from 2004 to 2007 as a teacher of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). During her journey as an international educator, she unveiled the processes of reconfiguration and expansion of identity that she experienced during her time navigating two national and linguistic contexts, unpacking the social significance and implications of her and others' stories for the field of English teaching and learning.

Solano-Campos (2014) argues that a critical and transnational perspective is necessary to depict better and understand the processes of socialization and globalization that contribute to the perpetuation of oppressive language ideologies, but that at the same time create avenues for the contestation and appropriation of dominant discourses about linguistic, national, and racial identities. Her work highlights how the pursuit of English native-like proficiency acts as a social force that coincides with global processes like international teacher recruitment to shape identities and life paths.

Through her experiences, she learned to acknowledge and recognize the linguistic practices of English speakers in expanding countries like Costa Rica and identify the layers and intersections embedded in a person's multiple identities. Solano-Campo's (2014) autoethnography work is significant for making meaning on contemporary transnationalism since she drew from the field of transnational studies to bring issues of worldwide mobility, border-thinking, and border-crossing to the forefront of conversations about language learning and

teaching. Her critical orientation to transnationalism involves looking at the social mechanisms that produce and contest inequality at a global scale (Schiller, 2009) and helps scholars to "theorize . . . the global flows of capital of various kinds, which contribute to stark differences between the competitive positioning of different localities" (Schiller, 2009, p. 24). In addition, she is interested in exploring the concept of transnationality as a "new form of diversity, that is cross-border life styles, adding and interacting with known ones such as gender, religion, language, and social class" (Kivisto & Faist, 2010, p. 310). Thus, she brings to the forefront the relationship between transnationalism and World Englishes and its implications for issues of language and power.

Her autobiographical teaching stories on her journey to the United States allowed me to look inward at the landscapes that shaped her transnational identity and outward the social-cultural process that gave her crossing particular significance. Besides, her narrative account reflects her dual positionality as a bilingual insider in her country of origin, Costa Rica, and bilingual outsider in the United States, with which I felt connected. Likewise, her work represents a mechanism to examine the development, contestation, intersection, and expansion of her identities before, during, and after she participated in the phenomenon of international teacher recruitment, as she moved back and forth between Costa Rica and the United States. It is interesting that throughout her continuum crossing of places and time, she identified various social practices through which she moved from an identity as an English learner, colorblind, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher from Costa Rica towards identity as a bilingual, racially constructed, international educator with a "transnational sensibility" (Friedman & Schultermandl, 2011, p. 5). Thus, Campo's (2014) study suggests that scholars and practitioners should examine the state of English teaching and learning in Latin American countries and

explore how varieties of English circulate and transform across time and space in each region. It is also essential to discover how English presents in transnational academics' daily lives across various virtual and physical transnational experiences.

Another significant autoethnographic reflection on transnational academic experiences and identity is Belford and Lahiri-Roy (2018), two transnational migrant women of color who reflect upon their individual educational experiences and shed light on the denial of their voices while positioning themselves within a transnational space in Australia. They explore the complex relations between educational experiences in their countries of birth imbued with postcolonial influences relating to social class, access and equity to education, their migration experiences, and "education as a mobility providing tool" (Moldenhawer, 2005, p. 52). Their stories discuss education's ability to open up avenues for exploring the multiplicity of transnational experiences, relations, and hybrid identities. However, despite residing in a transnational space, they still perceive themselves as speaking from disempowered positions as they feel their discourses are deemed peripheral to the host culture. Chua and Rubenfeld (2014) highlight these co-existing feelings of privilege and powerlessness as often experienced by educated ethnic migrants to Western nations. They, therefore, query the authority, authenticity, and positionality within their transnational voices using the opportunity afforded them by education.

Both Molina's (2020) narrative and Belford and Lahiri-Roy's (2018) stories contain voices speaking from lived experiences of selves and negotiations from inherited post-colonial histories, patriarchal limits, and socio-cultural encrustations that shaped their educational and migration experiences. Their stories reveal the ways how they negotiate their hybrid and transnational identities through complex heterogeneity and contingency. In enunciating multiple sites of struggle through their narratives—intergenerational female relationships, migration, and

the conflicts with identity and difference—this *polyvocality* (Mirza, 2006) allow them to "describe and interpret their lives in specific and dynamic historical processes that exceed the voice of their presumed race, gender, class and cultural locations" (Subreenduth & Rhee, 2010, p. 337). Besides, Belford and Lahiri-Roy's (2018) accounts reflect their feelings on how their education failed to feed the longing for equality of voice and agency as transnational women of color, and they worry that their voices will be silenced and overwhelmed, or as Roy (2004) manifests: "There's really no such thing as the "voiceless" There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard" (p. 1).

By reflecting on Belford and Lahiri-Roy's (2018) autoethnographic work, it is interesting to see how they have experienced engaging in a somewhat ambiguous cultural position as both insider and outsider and have violated boundaries which have always led to displacement (Trinh, 1991), in turn leading them to walk what she designates as "the in-between zones" (p. 70). They have been negotiating and reconstructing their future identities by finding new avenues to build a sense of belonging and a place in history to situate their hybrid positions of practice and negotiation (Homi, 1988). Their postcolonial educational journeys have represented what Mirza (2006) terms the "Golden Fleece," transforming them into transnationals. Both these narratives are ongoing and are in the process of negotiating resolutions within a familiar yet alien 'third' space wherein the divergent identities can coalesce into an uncontested hybrid one in the future.

Within the same direction on featuring the transnational, Phùng (2020) offers her autoethnographic inquiry by theorizing and exemplifying how the gravity of place gives rise to the evolvement of scholarship in the context of transnational mobility. She examines her career trajectory to demonstrate how groundedness results from the dynamics between displacement and emplacement. While recounting her experiences of moving back and forth between Western

universities and her home institution in Vietnam, she explores issues such as the nation-building framework for transnational mobility, scholarly self-formation, and community cultivation. Her study centers on a mode of emplacement termed existential commitment. It calls attention to cultivating a small, immediate scholarly community as a form of scholarship in the global periphery. Phùng's (2020) narrative emphasizes how the transnational can be grounded in local academic practices that address the world at multiple layers and scales.

By foregrounding her personal experience and career trajectory, Phùng's (2020) study has rendered scholarship, usually defined by abstract categories of problem and paradigm, visible as cultural, political, ethical, and personal entanglements. In that aspect, her study echoes the tone of struggle found in other stories of transnational returnees (Karakaş, 2020; Nonaka, 2020; Le Ha & Mohamad, 2020). Besides, her study sheds light on how groundedness results from the dynamics between displacement and emplacement in transnational mobility. From grounded positionalities, her scholarship has emerged and evolved while experiencing and practicing through existential commitment, a mode of emplacement implying her surrender to the gravity of the place. On the one hand, the transnational involves inhabiting different places spanning across nation-states. On the other hand, the primacy of place is "that of being an event capable of implanting things in many complex manners and too many complex effects—an issue of being in place differently, experiencing its eventfulness otherwise" (Casey, 2013, p. 337). In light of being in place differently, she brought into view a distinct form of scholarship that she has engaged in a periphery of *knowledge production*.

Phùng (2020) highlights the form of scholarship as an outperformance which means making efforts and achievements out of material and symbolic dearth by forming and cultivating a small intellectual community where people gather in a spirit of freedom and intimate relations.

For instance, while coming back to Vietnam, she got involved within a development agenda subjecting scholars to obligations of nation-building through transnational experience and global competition. It was not the end of transnationality; instead, it was essential to her transnational involvement. Like her, I believe that transnationality is less about spanning across nation-states with flattened relations than about increasing the depth of our experiences. It involves grappling with the weight of layers of experience and different frames and scales of addressing the world. The transnational is almost void without its groundedness. Moving back and forth between different frames and scales of addressing the world is crucial for navigating contemporary (academic transnational) society.

Regarding the relationship between contemporary academic mobility and knowledge production, Kim (2017) reflects on academic mobility and knowledge, identity capital, and their mutual entanglement as academics move internationally. He argues that the contemporary movement of academics takes place within old hierarchies among nation-states, but such old hierarchies intersect with new academic stratifications described and analyzed in his work. His analytical themes in the article inform excerpts from interviews of mobile academics in the UK, USA, New Zealand, Korea, and Hong Kong as selected examples of different locales of academic capitalism.

Kim (2017) sketches the biographical narratives of fifty mobile academics collected across disciplines and career stages in seven years (2008- 2015). Through biographical narrative analysis, he aims to show academic mobility as an ontological condition and how socio-spatial transfer of knowledge follows the transformation into transnational capital (Kim, 2017). He coined the term *transnational identity capital* to explicate how mobile academics reflexively use their embodied positional knowledge in their biographical and institutional border-transcending

and intellectual border-transgressing activities. His concept of transnational identity capital represents attributes associated with sets of personal psychosocial competencies in negotiating their ways in the transnational space, especially in the absence of tangible cultural guidance and social norms. Transnational capital then becomes a critical reflexive hexis. It is an authentic individual asset, not reproducible. It is more than cultural capital and social capital in the specific context of the national society. Transnational identity capital transcends national cultural boundaries. For Kim (2017), *transnational identify capital* is:

> Highly tacit, embodied, traveled knowledge. It is generic competencies to engage with "otherness," which enables mobility in and out of different habitus between and above international territorial boundaries. It is a mode of cosmopolitan positioning to forge and sustain multistranded social relations, which makes it easy to move in and out of diverse groups and contexts including ethnic and national sub-cultures. (p. 988)

With the biographical reflections by transnational mobile academics, Kim (2017) illustrates how mobility is about "situated cultural practices so that cultural logic works differently in non-Anglo contexts and non-English speaking academic systems" (p. 991). He then offers a comparative view on how different societies filter foreignness drawing on his biographical account of being a mobile academic in different national settings. Finally, he explains that universities are turning into transnational corporations in the globalized norms of academic capitalism, and the "façade of academic culture is represented by the discourse of excellence" (p.993). It is in this context that the patterns of transnational academic mobility can be understood.

In short, despite the surface similarities of policies, which promote academic mobility in many different places and international competition for global university rankings and

hierarchies, the reception of academic migrants varies geographically and can be framed by quite specific local peculiarities. Thus, the rules of stratification in academic capitalism are not transnational but place-bound.

It is necessary to reflect on how the illustrations from the lives of various academics reported in Kim (2017) and the concept of transnational academic capital suggest that mobile academics could make in themselves, in their assumptions, in their forms of intellectuality a challenge to local conditions of doxa. Bourdieu (1998) defines a form of doxa as a "particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant which represents and imposes itself as a universal point of view" (p. 57). It can be a force for academic creativity at a time when the "performativity regimens govern academic engagement in the production of knowledge (as doxa) – orchestrated by the competitive nation-state and transnational corporations which step up pressure on market-framed universities" (Kim, 2017, p. 994).

For Kim (2017), the university as a corporate form (Universitas) is now busy serving other business organizations (as well as the defense establishment), dealing above all in intellectual property, intellectual capital, and knowledge as a commodity. The doctrine in contemporary academic capitalist societies is clear now. In this regard, he suggests that transnational mobile academics bear witness to a historic process of the global transformation of the archetype university while struggling for excellence at the intersection of the roles of "businessmen and intellectuals both competing for dominance on the name of different principles" (Kim, 2017, p. 994).

After all, the university is a site of the establishment and exile, which entails an innate contradiction. The university is "inherently conservative in nature, and yet, intellectual fields are not built by consensus but by creative destruction" (Kim, 2017, p. 995). Accordingly, Kim

(2017) suggests that the position of a stranger "by acquiring 'transnational identity capital" would enable academics—both mobile and immobile academics who stand at the intersection of multiple forms of "otherness"—to professionalize strangerhood in knowledge creation as well as in institutional practices" (p. 995). It is needed for transnational and non-transnational academics to value and respect the diversity of perspectives that expands and alters the dialogues, but not in an addendum approach instead through a transformative diverseness. Furthermore, it would be exemplary to understand that "a bridge is not just about one set of people crossing to the other side; it's also about those on the other side crossing to this side" (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2013, p. 4). This becomes more pronounced, especially in these times where the *otherness* and *the stranger subject* have become more genuine than ever given the disturbing flashes of ethnocentrism and racism in the politics of societies.

Summary

The extensive network of relationships cultivated by frequent travel and border crossings between origin and destination and by transnational activities that link both sides of the migratory network and the virtual contacts of migrants with their families, friends, and compatriots who stayed behind is increasingly evident. That is why, given the new circumstances of human mobility in our contemporary world, it is necessary to review the paradigms of integration of immigrants in host societies. One of these paradigms is the *transnationalism theory*, considered an area of investigation of social sciences applied to international migratory movements. A significant contribution on the new transnational perspective is that of Portes (2003), in which he draws conclusions that establish five empirical shreds of evidence of the existence of *transnationalism* as a new field of study and around which there is a certain degree of consensus. Thus, for instance:

1. Transnationalism is a novel perspective and not a new phenomenon.
2. It is a phenomenon of the bases.
3. Not all international migrations are transnational.
4. Immigrant transnationalism as a macrosocial consequence;
5. The degree and forms of transnationalism vary according to the outgoing and receiving contexts (Portes, 2003, pp. 875-892).

Consequently, t*ransnationalism* is mainly related to the integration processes of immigrants in host societies concerning its implications and primarily related to new forms of ethnic residential settlement. Furthermore, it is precisely in these close relationships with both processes, residential settlement, and integration, the result of the unprecedented extension of transnational activities, that, in my opinion, lies the true potential of the transnational perspective.

Precisely, considering the theory of *transnationalism* as a theoretical framework, in this chapter, I emphasize the subjects' capacities, like mine, to maintain ties with communities of origin, with autonomy for the control of the State, and persistence and recovery of socio-cultural forms and customs. Besides, the analysis of contemporary patterns of *transnational academic mobility* is significant for this autoethnographic study. It has given shape and meaning to my transnational academic mobility due to my scholarly mobility and the challenging ways of thinking about shifting paradigms within academic processes and systems. The mobility of researchers, professionals (educators), students across institutions, sectors, and countries constitutes one of the most efficient vehicles for knowledge production, knowledge transfer, "internationalization, excellence and competitiveness" (Ackers, 2008, p. 413). In order to understand the transformation of knowledge as it progress and the transnational mobile

academics' identities, it is necessary to recognize and advocate the value of diverse mobility individual's lived experiences since the research regarding *transnationalism from below* still needs to develop within transnational arenas.

Therefore, this chapter clearly emphasizes the differentiated views on the benefits and challenges of human (academic) mobility and migration through transnationalism theory perspectives. To understand what it means to be a transnational (academic) migrant with *transnational identity capital* and continue developing this *transnational autoethnography* study, I will elaborate on the autoethnography methodological approach with its foundations, methods, and considerations. Through the autoethnography approach, I aim to celebrate and honor my transnational lived experiences during my journeys throughout the *path of Conocimiento* and metamorphic stages from *Azogueña caterpillar to a transnational (purple) butterfly* for acquiring my education for *Buen Vivir.* Education for *Buen Vivir* society is:

> That contributes to achieving a democratic, equitable, inclusive, peaceful society, promoting interculturality, tolerance of diversity, and respect for nature (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Chapter 3 - Positioning Autoethnography Through its Historical Background, Methods, and Writing Scopes

Introduction

All people go through changes in their lives, and it seems that I have gone through more than the average person. However, holding onto transcendental experiences by finding a fitting balance between the new and old, present and past, before and after, feels like living "in-between" (Anzaldúa, 1987).

What happens when we study a social fact or phenomenon, which is part of our personal and professional daily lives? How do we face its analysis and research if we coexist and get confused as an inseparable part of it? What kind of knowledge can we obtain, and what will be its validity? We are repeatedly required to answer these types of questions. We must seek a way to distance ourselves from those conditioning factors that may influence our approaches, preserving our objectivity above all. However, sometimes, it is difficult to follow these precepts, if not in exchange for obtaining an objective result in appearance but neutral and vacuous in content. In this case, my interest is in understanding and making meaning of the growing processes of *transnationalism* and *transnational academic mobility* as an aspiration to further the cause for equal and quality education for all as a *practice of freedom, democracy,* and *justice.* This, mainly due to colonial, post-colonial, aristocrats, and classism dogmas, manifest through my personal and professional experiences of more than twenty years, of which it seemed impossible to disengage.

I intend to understand, reflect, and analyze the existence of limits in the capacity of post-colonial educational practices and socio-cultural and political-economic effects in Latin American countries like Ecuador to sensitize and advocate for the Buen Vivir (Good Living) of people and families in conditions of poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion for effects of

political power, domination, social economic privilege, social stratification, and discriminations within the Ecuadorian educational system. The scarce and fragile empirical data with which to test this hypothesis is not conclusive. Despite this, I remember having experienced situations and circumstances over the years that seemed to indicate this. I am aware that this notion of *limits of scientific knowledge* varies according to the experience and subjectivity of each one, beginning with my(self). However, the biggest obstacle is relating and interpreting my personal experiences with obtaining knowledge, both rich and deep, capable of sustaining this idea within certain scientific canons. Consequently, for this (transnational) academic work, I contemplate the opportunities offered by a particular form of qualitative inquiry: *autoethnography*. The autoethnography dimension combines the analysis of those personal conditioning factors that, as research personnel, interfere in the construction of the object of study with the acquisition of knowledge arising from reflection and interpretation of lived experiences.

Thus, I start this chapter with the conviction and recognition that the implementation and completion of doctoral work is a severe and rigorous matter, creating a series of difficulties that can block such a process. However, empowerment comes from ideas, and knowledge revolution is "fought with concepts and fueled by vision. By focusing on what we want to happen, we change the present" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 5). My present reflects my knowledge revolution and evolution, conceived through a *transnational reflective-evocative autoethnographic approach* with *critical nuances*. Through this narrative approach, I aim to reveal the transcendence of my metamorphic journey from *Azogueña caterpillar* to a *transnational (purple) butterfly*. Through a balanced intervention from my lived experiences within the new and old, present and past, here and there, I intend to carry out a methodological

and interventionist reflection seeking to notice those who may otherwise not be allowed to tell their story or are denied a voice to speak.

As is currently the case with many concepts often used in social sciences in general, and in qualitative research in particular, these have become polysemic; they have a plurality of meanings. The term ethnography is not the exception since its significance has been modified and has become more complex (Marcus,1995). The ethnographic method, from the first systematization of its basic rules by the anthropologist B. Malinowski at the beginning of the 20th century, has been progressively enriched from practice and field experience until today, reaching high recognition rates in the field of social and human sciences (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). However, my purpose is not to account for how ethnography has developed over a century; many texts address its evolution (Hamilton & Taylor, 2012; Hess, 2001). Nevertheless, it is possible to notice that from this growth and the permanent search for new answers and inquiries, *autoethnography* becomes a powerful qualitative means for approaching the subjective processes that happen to the investigated subjects and the researcher him/herself, in the recurring and interwoven stages of an investigation.

Stacy Holman Jones (2005) describes autoethnography as a

> blurred genre… a response to the call….it is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art…. making a text present … refusing categorization … believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world. (as cited in Denzin, 2013, p. 19).

However, Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013a, paraphrase):

> autoethnography is the use of personal experience and personal writing to (1) purposefully comment on/critique cultural practices; (2) make contributions to existing research; (3) embrace vulnerability with purpose; and (4) create a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response. (p. 20)

Thus, autoethnography is "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (Spry, 2001, p. 710), as is a "research repertoire of qualitative inquiry" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 2). For this study, I consider autoethnography one of the alternative approaches for generating knowledge and pronouncement of positions in favor of other epistemological ways of knowing marginalized, suppressed, and discredited by modern science. Through my academic journeys, I have learned about social systems and structures of dominance and oppression within academia on a theoretical and methodological level. However, by shifting my identity as a postcolonial learner and educator to my *transnational identity capital* (Kim, 2010), as a result of my academic mobility and migration, I have become "critically engaged" (Sughrua, 2020, p. 603) in discovering culturally congruent scholarship and educational practices.

One decade of functioning within transnational spaces as an international/transnational scholar empowered my voice to the point of questioning and critiquing socio-cultural, political, and academic processes that shaped the subjectivities and positionalities that inform my past and negotiation of my hybridization identity. According to Sartre (1963), the belief in a fundamental subject that is present in the world has led sociologists to continue to search for a method that would allow them to uncover how these subjects give subjective meaning to their life experiences (cited in Denzin, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, the autoethnography method relies on the subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by the individuals studied, these

expressions being windows into a person's inner life (Denzin, 2013). Under this perspective, I position this academic work as a *transnational autoethnographic approach* (Denzin, 2013) to give value, capture, probe, and render meaning and understanding to elusive lived experiences and re-present them within academic and educational discourses cross-borders.

I embody my stories around "the personal and its relationship to culture" (Ellis, 2004, p. 31) within *evocative autoethnographic accounts* (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) descriptions and interpretations. (Ellis, 2004, p. 31). While reflecting on my socio-historical, postcolonial, and transnational cultural and academic experiences, I disclose vulnerabilities through intimate self-confessions when *writing stories* (Richardson, 2005) through expressive skills. For Ellis and Bochner (2000), the evocative term "contrasts expressive and dialogical objectives with the more traditional and representative orientations of the social sciences" (p. 744). In them, the story detaches from academic jargon and theoretical abstraction to privilege "stories over analysis, allowing and favoring alternative readings and multiple interpretations" (pp.744-745). Thus, the texts should encourage those who read them to feel the integrity of their stories, to become participants, hooking them to the thread of a tale morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually.

From the methodological point of view, autoethnography is an indissoluble mixture of elements traditionally considered subjective, being a subject and an object of research simultaneously, using literary figures or fiction. In other words, autoethnography, in addition to being a *method*, is a *process* and *product* (Ellis et al., 2015). As a method, it incorporates the relational practices of its experience with culture, its shared values, and beliefs. As a process, Ellis and Bochner (2000) allude to:

> an autobiographical genre of writing and research that shows multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. The back-and-forth gaze of autoethnographers, first through a wide ethnographic angle lens, focusing outward on aspects social and cultural experiences of their personal experience; then looking inward, exposing a vulnerable 'I' (self), which moves and can move through, refracts, and resists cultural interpretations. (p. 739)

On the other hand, evocative autoethnography as a product consists of aesthetic and evocative text that uses techniques through which it is possible to show thoughts, emotions, and actions of those who star in them for the audience to experience the same experience or a part of it. These texts are generally short and written in the first person; they can present in various formats: *poetry*, *short stories*, fiction, novels, or *photographic essays* and sometimes with all or several of them in one.

In this regard, the style and methodology that the researcher applies would depend on the researcher's specific situation and available material possibilities. However, it would also depend on their ability to use and recreate a particular literary style. As Noy (2003) recalls, there is no recipe or correct way to write an autoethnography. Thus, autoethnography not only depends on the objective, as Vryan (2006) states, it also depends on the ability or capacity of the person who investigates. In similar terms, Spry (2011) pronounces, “all the potentiality and possibilities contained in performative autoethnography depend on the quality of its report, on its linguistic and aesthetic construction, and on its ability to make writing work” (p. 507).

Under these parameters, I aim to construct an evocative autoethnographic story with a critical focus on my transnational academic and socio-cultural experiences. Through disciplined self-reflection that this type of research implies, I intend to understand and take awareness of

aspects and dimensions regarding my *transnational identity capital*, *academic mobility, post-colonial education*, *the path of Conocimiento*, and *Buen Vivir fundamentals*, that an empirical position would probably have overlooked.

Thus, it is significant to emphasize that this work is nontraditional dissertation work that does not adhere to the traditional format or conventional rules. Consequently, it may risk falling into critical cultural and educational hegemony (Four Arrows, 2008). However, with the aspiration of culminating my doctoral program with a work capable of being innovative, authentic, and honor[ing] the centrality of the researcher's voice (my voice), experience, creativity and authority (Four Arrows, 2008), this chapter is to identify fundamental methodological components. So, this autoethnographic study is re-presented and capable of reaching more prominent and more diverse audiences (Ellis et al., 2010), capturing the attention of those who read it and even provoking connectivity and empathy.

Consequently, I begin by underlining the historical dimensions of autoethnography and explaining how I align this work with critical, transnational nuances. Since autoethnography is a mix of artistic representation, scientific inquiry, self-narration, and ethnography (Ngunjiri et al., 2010), through a creative (evocative) text, I aim to value lived experience of my (self) as the subject that I connect with my transnational spaces, activities, and practices. In addition, under central autoethnographic scopes, this transnational inquiry ponders directions related to my global (hybrid) identity, its values, and shared processes to legitimize the meaning of my experiences living as a protagonist along with them.

Then I discuss important structural considerations related to the research processes, predominantly in conventional dissertations since some autoethnography works are more central than others. Although they all appear universal, they can change and take different forms

depending on the writer, the place of writing, and the historical moment. They shape the telling, performing, and understanding of lives. In so doing, they "create the subject matter of the autoethnographic approach" (Denzin, 2013, p. 7). Specifically, I examine methodological standards regarding *writing as a method*, w*riting style, and format of ethnographies aligned to the path of Conocimiento, sites of data collection*, and *data analysis and interpretation*. Ultimately, the purposes of this chapter are, on the one hand, to explain why this project blurs the lines between researcher, participant, process, and product, and on the other hand, to identify critical methodological considerations that are still present within those blurry lines.

Historical Considerations of Autoethnography Inquiry

For decades qualitative research has not only been carried out in much of the Western world, but, it seems, its validity and its contributions no longer require great defenses from the academy. Even though the qualitative aspect of social research does not constitute a single or homogeneous field, facets of this perception continue to be disqualified by normative science (Blanco, 2012). However, voices from both the Anglo-Saxon world (Flaherty et al., 2002) and positions closer to Latin America (de Souza, 2003) recognize that a Western global model of scientific rationality continues to preponderate. Yet, they favor "other ways of knowing marginalized, suppressed and discredited by modern science" (de Souza, 2003, p. 27). In this context, it is possible to consider *autoethnography* as one of those alternative approaches for the generation of knowledge whose approach leads to previous references to the more traditional ethnography from which it derives. To consider important historical aspects of the emergence of autoethnography, particular literature produced in the Anglo-Saxon world is taken as a basis because its practice in Spanish-speaking countries is still nascent.

As is known within the history of the investigation until the end of the Second World War, the central universe of study of ethnography and the social sciences was that *other* or *stranger* located many times within a colonialist context (Blanco, 2012; Ellis et al., 2015). With an eagerness to frame within the positivist paradigm, it aimed to account for the *objective* with *valid* and *reliable* data. Thus, from the postwar period to the 1970s, some authors consider it a *golden age*, conceiving it as *rigorous qualitative analysis*, whereas post-positivism functioned as a powerful epistemological paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Thus, the questioning of positivism and its derivatives led, among other things, to more interpretive approaches. It is how the term *blurred genres* emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, pointing out the boundaries between the social disciplines themselves and the humanities had become indefinite, *blurred, and overlapped*. As Geertz (1973, 1983) argued, "the old, functional, positivist, behaviorist and totalitarian approaches to human disciplines were giving way to a more plural, interpretive and open-ended perspective" (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 24).

Then, the postmodernist-inspired "crisis of confidence" in the 1980s introduced abundant new opportunities to reformulate the social sciences and reinvent their goals and forms of inquiry (Ellis et al., 2015). In this sense, a profound rupture occurs since there is a substantial erosion of the classical norms governing social sciences' research processes. For example, information gathering and writing become more reflective as the researcher's *authority* to account for *reality* is questioned, a transition known today as a crisis of representation (Ellis et al., 2015). Regarding ethnography, some authors affirm that fieldwork and writing mix with each other. In this way, the *crisis of representation* moves qualitative research in new and critical directions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Another more specific form of referring to this period is to locate it as the precise beginning of a turn or bias in the practice of ethnography toward a literary project

(Trencher, 2002). By the 1990s, it proposed new ways of doing qualitative research and producing written results. Even more significant are the literary and rhetorical aspects in such a way that it denotes a *narrative turn.*

In this context, scientists became increasingly concerned with the social sciences' ontological, epistemological, and axiological limitations (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In particular, they began by clarifying how the facts and truths that researchers discovered linked to the vocabularies and paradigms used to represent them (Kuhn, 1996; Rorty, 1982). They became aware of the impossibility and lack of interest in establishing universal narratives (Certeau, 1984; Lyotard, 1984) as they noted new relationships between authors, audiences, and texts (Barthes, 1977; Derrida, 1978). They also realized that stories were complex, constitutive, and significant phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced a unique way of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others (Adams, 2008; Bochner, 2001, 2002; Fisher, 1984).

Thus, the exercise of writing about one's life for a scientific purpose is an old aspiration. It arises as a possibility within the process of disenchantment of a world based on grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) that considers there is no objective truth but only narratives about the reality (Barthes, 1987; Ibañez, 1994), and that defends the law as a legitimate appreciation of the experience lived by those who star in it. Inscribed in the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, it coexists with other strategies that take the narrated experiences of the subject as their center (Montagud Mayor, 2016). Today all these initiatives are brought together within a particular field of qualitative research: narrative research. Along with it, there is a whole series of approaches sheltered indistinctly under the nomenclature of *creative, analytical practice* (Richardson, 2000) or self-methodologies (Pensoneau &Toyosaki, 2011). In them,

autoethnography situates along with other old approaches such as autobiography or reflective ethnography. They all present the most relevant characteristic of knowing and theorizing about the self, from the self, and for the self (Schrag, 1997). Through a type of narrative, artistic language combines with that of the social sciences, giving rise to a creative text that values the subject's experience and connects him/her with his/her social environment.

According to Ellis et al. (2015), following the same perspective, there was a growing need to resist a colonialist and aseptic research style. By entering an authoritarian culture, it exploited its members and then carelessly left them, ignoring all ties, for writing on them, thus obtaining economic or professional benefits (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis, 2007). Increasingly, scientists from various disciplines began to consider what the social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than physics. They proposed stories instead of theories and were consciously value-centered rather than pretending to be free of them (Bochner, 1994). Many of these scientists turned to autoethnography because they looked for a positive response to criticisms of canonical ideas about what research is and how it should be enacted (Ellis et al., 2015). They focused mainly on ways to produce meaningful, accessible, and evocative research, based on personal experience, that sensitized readers to issues of political identity, silenced events, and forms of representation that deepened the ability to empathize with people who are different from ourselves (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

For this reason, autoethnographers recognize the myriad ways in which personal experience influences the research process. For example, researchers decide who, what, when, where, and how to investigate, decisions that necessarily link to institutional requirements, resources, and personal circumstances. In addition, researchers can change names and places to protect their informants (Fine, 1993). They can also compress years of work into a single text

and structure it in a predetermined way. For example, they can propose an introduction, literature review, a section for the methodology, another for the results, and a conclusion (Tullis Owen et al., 2009). Although some scientists still assume that research can result from a neutral, impersonal, and objective position (Atkinson, 1997; Buzard, 2003; Delamont, 2009), most admit that such an assumption can no longer be sustained (Bochner, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Then *autoethnography* is considered one of the approaches recognizing and giving rise to subjective, emotional factors that influence the researcher's work, instead of hiding these issues or pretending they do not exist.

At the same time, scientists began by recognizing people have different assumptions about the world - "infinity ways of speaking, writing, valuing, and believing - and that conventional ways of doing and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and limited" (Ellis et al., 2015, p. 252). These differences may be due to race (Anzaldúa, 1987; Boylorn, 2006; Davis, 2009), gender (Blair et al., 1994; Keller, 1995), sexuality (Foster, 2008; Glave, 2005), age (Dossa, 1999; Paulson & Willig, 2008), disability (Couser, 1997) social class (hooks, 2000; Callahan, 2008), education (Delpit, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999) or religion (Droogsma, 2007). For the most part, "those who still insist on endorsing canonical ways of doing and writing research are defending the point of view of the white male, heterosexual, Christian, middle/upper class, and without disabilities" (Ellis et al., 2015, p. 252). Following these conventions, the researcher ignores other ways of knowing and assumes they are deficient and invalid. For its part, *autoethnography* expands and opens a broader lens on the world, avoiding rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful and valuable research. This approach also helps us understand how the type of people we are or the way others perceive us impact our

interpretations of what we study, how we look at it, and what we say about our subject of study (Adams, 2005; Wood, 2009).

Regarding these historical contemplations on *autoethnography*, I conclude that it arose during the seventies from the ethnographic branch of anthropology when it immersed itself in an intense representation crisis due to the supposedly scientific partiality exercised during the colonial period. In the mid-eighties, some ethnographers reacted against this trend by proposing a change in orientation that meant moving from a scientific authority, presumably distanced from the object of study, to an interpretive authority that assumed and acknowledged that it was translating its observations. Thus, the renewal of the ethnographic method illuminated a new praxis-oriented to the self (Schrag, 1997) that accepts the intersubjectivity between the subject, the object, and the research medium without abdicating its scientific claim.

In this environment, new spaces for the cultivation of *autoethnography* emerged. Consequently, the academy has produced substantial literature to support this method (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Chang, 2009; Ellis et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2016; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Wall, 2006, 2008) as scholars began to value the focused narratives based on interpretive and critical theories and deconstructive critiques.

Perspectives on the Meaning of Autoethnography

The autoethnography approach has developed for the last three decades in anthropology and ethnography, although its scope and meaning have altered over the years. The first mention appears in an article by Hayano (1979) to refer to:

> Those cultural studies of anthropologists about their own community in which the researcher has privileged information by virtue of his condition of 'native' acquiring an

intimate familiarity with the group or achieving the condition of full member in the group that is being studied. (p.100)

Although Hayano (1979) limited his definition to the field of anthropology, *autoethnography* has been gaining supporters over time and today, admitting its ethnographic roots, the term acquires a broader meaning in areas as diverse as sociology, psychology, literature, or history. Currently, the most widely accepted definition is that of Ellis et al. (2010), for whom *autoethnography* as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to systematically describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (p. 1). Besides, as a form of ethnography, autoethnography is "part *auto* or self and part *ethno* or culture" and "something different from both of them, greater than its parts" (Ellis, 2004, pp. 31-32). It means that "whether we call a work an *autoethnography* or an *ethnography* depends as much on the claims made by authors as anything else" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 449). In autoethnography research, the writer's self offers its body and experience as a medium, the cultural experience encompassing an extensive physical, symbolic, and ideological context. It stands out that the person who investigates, what is investigated, and who narrates it coincide in the same story that aspires to reveal a broader phenomenon or social problem in which such person immerses.

Thus, the notion of inquiry built solely on structured and rigid truth-seeking methodologies to find grand narratives became strongly disturbing. As a result, qualitative scholars (Denzin et al., 2008; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) began to consider the world as a collection of smaller localized truths that mapped onto larger socio-cultural and political constructs. With this alteration in thinking, there was a newfound emphasis on privileging stories of the marginalized in calculated attempts to disrupt the power dynamics of the socio-cultural

systems in place--including academe. Thus, scholars such as Ellis et al. (2015) provide a great entry point into understanding *autoethnography* as the approach that "challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" (pp, 249-250). According to Adams et al. (2015), *autoethnography* is a qualitative research method that:

> (1) uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences; (2) acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others; (3) uses deep and careful self-reflection-typically referred to as "reflexivity"-to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political; (4) shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles; (5) balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity; and 6) strives for social justice and to make life better. (p. 2).

In other words, autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of academic writing that draws on analysis and interpretation of personal lived stories. The author's lived experience connects researcher insights to self-identity, cultural rules, resources, communication practices, traditions, premises, symbols, rules, shared meanings, emotions, values (Poulos, 2021), and more significant social and cultural-political issues.

Therefore, in autoethnographic research, we openly show ourselves to others. We understand we are part of the world we are living in since each human creates society and culture and draws on them to build their own identity. One way of looking at *autoethnography* is by placing it in the epistemological perspective that holds an individual life can account for the contexts in which that person has to live and the historical periods they go through throughout

his/her existence (Blanco, 2012). Ferraroti, ([1983] 1988) explained the individual does not totalize a global society directly. She/he does so by mediating its immediate social context and the limited groups of which she/he is a part.

In the same way, society totalizes each specific individual through mediating institutions. However, it is essential to have in mind that in the case of current autoethnography, "the distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond self-recognition" (Ellis, 1999: 673), and it is pertinent to add that variety is also present in the emphasis each author gives to their text, where some lean more toward the personal facet and others show a preference for the cultural sphere or the research process itself (Ellis, 2008). So, the autoethnographic proposal is an indissoluble mix between the dimensions traditionally called objective and subjective.

In this context, *autoethnography* allows researchers to apply nontraditional research practices to account for their stories while reclaiming marginalized and self-reflective voices. For instance, narrative research methodology, a multi-layered form of investigation, discursively embraces multiple representations of lived experiences (Xu & Connelly, 2010; Craig, 2009; Fox, 2008; Clandinin, 2006). In addition, traditional forms of ethnography tend not to value the connected life experiences of the researcher; autoethnography finds a place and presence for the researcher's life experiences (Mizzi, 2010). Therefore, autoethnography helps us understand how people experience everyday life and explore ways to make sense of life and prompt knowledge. Consequently, an autoethnographer reveals the voice of the insider rather than the voice of the *seeker of truth* (Dyson, 2007; Mitra, 2010).

Contrastingly, criticisms of the autoethnographic method have been multiple. It has been considered a vague, imprecise research method without solid and clearly defined rules, making it

a quicksand field. Other arguments have emerged against *autoethnography* since it is a method from which it is impossible to extract completely objective data. At the same time, the researcher is an inescapable variable in this case, from which how the data themselves are derived also arises, finally interpreted and shown to the public (Ellis, 1999; Spry, 2001; Wall, 2008). Autoethnography has also received criticism for being self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, individualized, and overly emotional (Atkinson, 1997; Coffey, 1997; Delamont, 2009). One of the most recurrent questions in the evocative and narrative method is how personal experiences present when other people are involved in them, with whom the researcher relates, establishing links of different nature, friendship, love, kinship, and more (Ellis, 2007; Wall, 2008).

Despite criticism, autoethnography's inherent quality relates to its deep anthropological meaning, which makes it potentially valuable in social work. Autoethnography qualities such as *self-awareness* or its *transformative* value have multiplied the possibilities for exploration and debate about the social (academic) practice (Muñoz, 2019). Essentially, the autoethnographic method assumes the researcher is part of the world where s/he lives, both literally and figuratively. There is an indissoluble link between the personal and the cultural. Through *autoethnography*, we communicate our intimate self to the world, transfer it to the reality that surrounds us, and make it visible to the gaze of others.

Likewise, autoethnography recognizes all research is subjective; research is an extension of researchers' lives and realizes knowledge construction is not so analytical or linear that answers to questions are absolute (Ngunjii et al., 2010; Starr, 2010). Autoethnography is self-focused, and the researcher is the center of the investigation. Autoethnographic data provide the researcher with a window through which the outside world understands. Although the blurring of the researcher-participant relationship has become a source of criticism for the methodology,

access to sensitive issues and innermost thoughts makes this research method a powerful and unique arena for understanding (Ngunjiri et al., 2010).

Consequently, as in other rapidly growing fields of the social sciences, *autoethnography* has become engulfed in a myriad of possible applications and meanings that have led to its understanding in different ways. Perhaps due to this border character between science and literature defended by Sáez (2001), several procedural meanings and possibilities have been proposed as a research method. By understanding that qualitative research is diverse, there is no one correct way of designing or conducting a qualitative study through narrative inquiry as a methodological framework and autoethnography as a research method. Therefore, I offer a lens to studying my transnational stories and experiences as a way of knowing, exploring, discovering, understanding what it means to be a *transnational (academic) migrant*. Going through stages of the *path of Conocimiento* embraced *transnational identity capital* interacting within socio-cultural and educational spaces to achieve the paradigms of *Buen Vivir*. Furthermore, *autoethnography* is a method that intends to disrupt the power structures that have long marginalized *Other* perspectives, which is why this study aligns explicitly with critical, evocative, and transnational autoethnographic representations, which I discuss below.

Autoethnography as Method Aligned to Transnationalism and Path of Conocimiento

As a method, *autoethnography* combines specific characteristics of autobiography and ethnography, which allow studying the relational practices of a culture, its values, and its shared experiences, collaborating in the understanding of the whole where the author situates. Bochner and Ellis (1996), founders and active promoters of autoethnography as a research method, together with Richardson (2003), argue this approach explores using the first person when writing, the appropriation of literary studies for practical purposes, and the complications of

being located within what one is studying. Thus, autoethnography broadens its conception to accommodate personal or autobiographical accounts and the ethnographer's experiences as a researcher-either separately or in combination-situated in a social and cultural context.

Similarly, Ellis (1991) encourages the use of autoethnography as a "method through self-observation as part of the situation to study for self-introspection and auto-ethnography, as a legitimate focus of self-study" (p. 30). In this sense, since its appearance, autoethnography has been linked to different narrative practices that receive similar names or have identical meanings, which influenced its understanding. In such a situation, Ellis (2004) offers a characterization of the traits a narrative exercise that seeks to classify as autoethnography must meet:

1. It should generally be written in the first person, making yourself the object of investigation.
2. The focus of any generalization will generally be within a single case in time rather than across multiple points.
3. The writing will resemble a novel or biography because it develops with a narrator, characters, and a plot.
4. Relationships should be dramatized as connected episodes that unfold over time and not as snapshots.
5. The researcher's life studies together with the lives of the rest of the participants in a reflective connection.
6. Accessibility of writing positions the person as a participant who engages in the dialogue instead of a passive recipient; and,
7. The narrative text should be evocative, often revealing hidden details of private life and highlighting the emotional experience. (p.30)

From this relationship, it is important to highlight those traits considered substantial. One of the identifying signs of autoethnographic writing is that it makes the self who investigates well visible. When writing about lived experience, "the corpus of experience disappears into a text that then reads as a representation of the life experiences of the individual studied" (Denzin, 2013, p. 36). Therefore, the exercise and significance of the autoethnographic method lie in its user's ability to capture, probe, and render understandable problem experiences" (Denzin, 2013, p. 36). If it is not achievable, if subject representations of lived experiences, as given in stories, cannot be represented, then the method ends up producing the kinds of documents structured by a logic that separates writer, text, and subject matter (Denzin, 2013).

In this same perspective, the autoethnographic method reflects in a real subject who is present in the world and has led sociologists to continue to search for a *method* (Sartre, 1963) that would allow them to uncover how these subjects give subjective meaning to their life experiences (Schutz, 1967). Thus, this method would rely on "the subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by the individuals being studied, these expressions being windows into the inner life of a person" (Denzin, 2013, p. 2). In other words, an autoethnographic method is a distinctive approach to the study of human experience. It is the method by which the natural appearance of real people creates (Denzin, 2013).

When researchers write autoethnography, they narrate retrospectively and selectively about epiphanies that arise and are possible because they are part of a culture and have a particular cultural identity (Ellis et al., 2015). An epiphany occurs as an intimate phenomenon that one person views as a transformative experience while another does not. An epiphany also shows how intense situations and lasting effects (memories, images, feelings) manifest long after a crucial event concludes (Bochner, 1984).

In addition to recounting their experiences, autoethnographers are required to follow the social science publishing protocol for analysis. Autoethnographic researchers demand to dissect experiences analytically, critically, and reflectively to make their stories and accounts valid and representable. It is possible by applying theoretical and methodological approaches as well as bibliographic and literature background. For Ellis et al. (2015), autoethnographers must not only make use of methodological means and the scientific literature to analyze the experience, but they must also consider how others might experience similar epiphanies, using personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural understanding. In this way, they make the characteristics of a culture familiar to both insiders and outsiders. Achieving this may require comparing and contrasting personal experience with existing research (Ronai, 1996), interviewing members of a culture (Foster, 2006; Marvasti, 2005), and analyzing relevant cultural artifacts (Denzin, 2006). It is in this sense that grounded in active self-reflexivity, which "refers to the careful consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact these same researchers' interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene" (Tracy, 2020, p. 2), autoethnography is a method that attempts to recenter the researcher's experience as vital in and to the research process.

Consequently, autoethnography is an "observational, participatory, and reflexive method using writing on the self in contact with others to illuminate the many layers of human social, emotional, theoretical, political, and cultural praxis" (Poulos, 2021, pp. 4-5). A variety of possible applications and meanings have led to understanding it in different ways. For instance, Denzin (2013) refers to autoethnography works regarding their form and content. Concerning its form, they can be *poetic* (Hanauer, 2012), *critical reflexive* (Madison, 2012, pp. 197-199), analytic, *evocative*, narrative, performative, collaborative, political, postcolonial, *transnational*,

and relational. Furthermore, when denoting content, they can refer to family, place, other, trauma, loss, illness, abuse, sexuality, race, death, divorce, embodied, queer, so forth.

Likewise, Ellis et al. 2015 refer to the types and approaches of autoethnography, which differ according to the emphasis placed on the study of others, the researcher him/herself and her/his interaction with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context as in power relations. These can be Indigenous/native ethnographies, narrative ethnographies, reflective dyadic interviews, *reflective ethnographies*, multilevel reporting, interactive interviews, community autoethnographies, co-constructed narratives, and personal narratives. Continuing with this typology of autoethnography, Chang (2008) asserts that autoethnography "transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation" (p. 43); and, "mere self-exposure without profound cultural analysis and interpretation leaves this writing at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir" (p. 51).

Thus, Chang (2008) categorizes autoethnography into three forms: descriptive/self-affirmative, analytical/interpretive, and confessional/self-critical (p. 39). All these autoethnographies formats convey particular schemes, meanings, and purposes that lead to understanding them differently. In other words, there is no recipe or correct way to write an autoethnography (Noy, 2003). The style and methodology that the researcher applies depend on the researcher's specific situation, the available material possibilities, the researcher's ability to use and recreate a particular autoethnographic representation.

Aligning Transnationalism with Autoethnography

As Ellis (2016) declares:

> As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and the focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created. I

> am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller. (p. 13)

Within this perspective, positioning myself as a transnational academic migrant, I situate and recognize this study as a *transnational autoethnography* (Denzin, 2013). From its theoretical perspective, transnationalism acknowledges that migrant patterns and social relations have changed with the onset of globalization (Russ, 2013; Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 1999). Moreover, the identity formation of individuals has transcended international political boundaries, effectively removing the nation-state as a category of analysis (Klages, 2012; Pence & Zimmerman, 2012; Portes et al., 1999; Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 1999). Thus, transnationalism centers human social relations as the correct unit of analysis, asserts identities are fluid and multiple in individuals, and centers difference to contrast the seemingly ubiquitous nature implied of globalization (Briggs, 2008; Pence & Zimmerman, 2012; Portes et al., 1999).

Therefore, although this work could be perceived and labeled with multiple lenses and terms, I intend to analyze, reflect, deconstruct and construct meaning on my personal experiences within transnational socio-cultural spaces by positioning this autoethnographic narrative within the transnational lens. Besides, transnationalism emerged as a framework to understand immigrants' activities and experiences across borders and their influence on their lives in the receiving community. Thus, by understanding that *transnationalism from below* relates to human collectivities, individuals engage in activities that cross boundaries and create social spaces that overlap boundaries between different nation-states (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). Therefore, I actively observe, self-reflect, critique, and narrate my transnational situatedness and hybrid identity in response to my interactions and activities within dual socio-cultural, political, and academic environments.

In particular, "autoethnographic texts democratize the representational sphere of culture by locating the specific experiences of individuals in tension with dominant expressions of discursive power" (Neumann, 1996, p. 189). Thus, I consciously attempt to reveal stories and accounts of my lived experiences where cultures along with their people meet, clash, and grapple with each other often in contexts of high relations of power and control. Moreover, the complexities of my metamorphic phases by living in multicultural communities and transnational spaces demand that I develop a perspective that considers the diversity of knowledge and worldviews derived from *before* and *after* experiencing divergent cultural realities with mindful and holistic awareness.

Mainly, my enthusiasm and optimism for interweaving autoethnography with transnationalism angles are because I pursue to validate and honor my three revolutionary academic journeys, which have been the light for my *transnational identity capital* to evolve. As *transnational identity capital* is "an authentic individual asset, not reproducible" (Kim, 2017, p. 987), through *reflective/ narrative ethnographies* (Ellis, 2004), I confess my inevitable changes and transitions by the *path of Conocimiento*. It started from self-identifying as Azogueña-Ecuadorian (postcolonial) caterpillar until becoming a transnational (Edcat) butterfly.

Thus, crossing international borders as an academic aspiring to accelerate knowledge production and educational excellence was utterly life-changing. It led me to evolve my critical thinking toward new perspectives of viewing and rehearsing contemporary teaching-learning processes, rethink old ideologies, and sprout new theories and philosophies regarding education. That is why the *critical autoethnographic sight* also informs this work. According to Jones et al. (2016), one characteristic that binds all autoethnographies is a personal experience examining or critiquing cultural experience. Thus, autoethnographers intentionally highlight the relationship of

their experiences and stories to culture and cultural practices, with many authors choosing to launch a critique of this relationship in their work.

By embracing critical arguments that emerged throughout my transnational (academic) experiences within North and South American societies, I attempt to understand how my hybrid identity developed and how it impacts the way I think, feel, and see myself. Furthermore, an autoethnography that describes and critiques cultural beliefs and practices often also breaks silences and reclaims lost voices (Boylorn, 2006; Granger, 2012; Adams & Jones, 2011; Metta, 2010). I challenge to break my silenced voice by examining socio-cultural conditions and constructs to encounter process and power dynamics that I have evidenced, especially within academic areas. I acknowledge that when writing critically, it is essential to recognize subjectivities through reflexivity, identify privileges and injustices within a lived domain, and address processes of inequality as an ethical responsibility (Boylorn & Orbe, 2016). Therefore, my reflective narratives aim to construct a dialogue that focuses on illuminating and linking tacit and explicit knowledge of social and relational practices with related theory (Kempster et al., 2008).

Thus, this sense of criticality allows for participation and knowledge construction across my transnational relationships and experiences derived from differences, often connecting privileged with marginalized to understand better the complexity of social structures related to lack of opportunities for quality education and academic excellence conception and construction. Likewise, my critical adjudication occurs due to the transformation of my postcolonial and national identity while living in a constant state of displacement, shifting consciousness, and expanding knowledge around social issues existing in every society. Consequently, this *reflective transnational autoethnography* with *critical nuances* replicates the alterations of my life on

almost every level, forcing me to re-examine my identity, my connection with my body, my teaching-learning practices, and my transnational worldview.

In short, it is essential to acknowledge the political nature of this transnational autoethnographic text. It aims to break the silences embedded in traditional research while recognizing that the "autoethnography method conceives humans as possibly-patterned-but-unpredictable beings and not static and stoic machines" (Soukup, 1992; Ellis, 1991 as cited in Jones et al., 2016, p. 36). By breaking silence surrounding my transnational experiences as they unfold within both Americas 'cultures and transnational academic practices, I am not using my personal experiences solely to describe or facilitate an understanding of cultural experiences. Instead, I use my individual experiences to promote social change and evidence how this project ties inherently to praxis in social justice politics. As Jones (2005) asserts, autoethnographers should understand that their work does not "stand alone in the world" and that "it does not act alone" (p. 763). Jones (2015) emphasizes that when these personal accounts stitch into the larger scholarly discourses, they intend to create discursive and material solidarity amongst similar projects to create change.

Likewise, by disclosing my personal experiences to promote social change, I am "compelling readers to think about taken-for-granted cultural experiences in astonishing, unique, and often problematic ways. Further, to take new and different actions in the world based on the insights generated by [this] research" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 36). From this standpoint, this work aims to evoke and bring possibilities for change and I am not writing from a place of neutrality. On the contrary, I am writing from a place of marginalization, postcolonial and transnational entanglements. I intend to create stories that influence social justice praxis, especially in spaces of inequality and ineffective educational processes resulting from the generationally inherited

social stratification due to classism and oppressor political power in Latin American countries, such as Ecuador.

Now, as qualitative research is diverse, and there is no one correct way of designing or conducting it, this transnational reflective autoethnographic study will adopt methodological procedures aligned to its purpose as a type of narrative inquiry. Therefore, moving forward, I will focus on the methodological design I intend to employ in this project specifically.

Research Design

This section addresses the methodological framework, methodology, methods of inquiry, and analysis and implications that I will apply for this study. The methodological approach, data collection methods, data analysis, interpretation, and re-presentation are precisely selected based on the research questions and carefully considering the purpose of this study. As stated earlier, the broad goal is to understand and reflect on what it means to become a transnational academic migrant with a *transitional identity capital* (Kim, 2017) due to educational mobility processes while interacting in intersectional ethnographic spaces. Besides, recognizing how my transnational lived experiences empowered my *activist spirit* (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013) first to critique autocratic postcolonial educational practices that I was not wholly aware of that persist in Ecuadorian educational contexts. Then to value my socio-cultural and academic displacements, a vital catalyst for shifting my *explicitly codified knowledge* to *organic and reflexive spatialized knowledge, namely embodied and encultured knowledge* (Kim, 2010). With this research purpose alignment in mind, the methodological framework that orients this dissertation work is *narrative inquiry*.

Narrative inquiry is a broad, meta-level framework that has roots in the humanities as narratology (Browning, 2009; Chase, 2005). It assumes that individual interpretation of

experience and construction of meaning is through storied accounts of the past and present (Clandinin, 2006; Kim, 2012). According to Kim (2015):

> Narrative inquiry is a storytelling methodology in which a story(ies) of a research participant(s) is researched as a way of knowing…Using narratives and stories as phenomena to understand what it means to be human, narrative inquiry utilizes interdisciplinary interpretive lenses with diverse approaches and methods, all revolving around the narratives and stories of research participants…It is used as a way of knowing that catches the two sides of narrative, telling as well as knowing. (as cited in Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 93).

Therefore, narrative inquiry offers a lens, a framework for studying storied lives, and allows the researchers to use stories to interpret their experiences with the world, a particular event, or the world in general. When doing narrative inquiry, the object of study could be a narrative phenomenon, the process of telling stories, or how storied lives become a performance or reveal identities (Bhattacharya, 2017). Thus, researchers interested in using accounts to understand social patterns consider narrative inquiry to explore, discover, and construct accounts based on participants' recounting experiences.

A study by Chan (2017) argues that in education, narrative inquiry serves as a process of knowledge construction and reflection and thorough investigations into narratives. The participants can reflect on what they have experienced in their lives. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain, *teachers' lived experiences* can be a source of knowledge for classroom practices. Thus, narrative methods can serve as "pedagogical strategies in teacher education since narrative can help both teachers and learners reflect on, question, and learn from their storied experiences" (Chang, 2017, p. 22).

There are many types of methodological approaches within the narrative inquiry, and *autoethnography* is one of them. As in the autoethnography method, the researcher takes a personal reflective journey into parts of her experiences and systematically analyzes those experiences within the cultural context of those experiences. Thus, the *autoethnography narratives* relate to the self, situated in specific cultural contexts. In this perspective, Jones et al. (2016) explain that autoethnography "offers a variety of modes of engaging with self or perhaps more accurately with selves, in relation to others, to culture" (p. 65). That is why for many autoethnographers, there is a sense of principle involved when writing autoethnographic narratives.

It cannot be precisely to highlight methodological criteria but rather to tell a story that reveals the self as a central character with rich emotional evocation that ground the story told. As Tedlock (2016) manifests, "writing and performing vulnerably from the heart with analytic accuracy" allows autoethnographers to "emerge from a flat soulless description of social worlds" into "sensuous, evocative research that encourages and supports both personal development and social justice" (as cited in Jones et al., 2016, p. 39). Thus, autoethnographers add something new, exciting, and essential to their (writing) lives by telling stories. Autoethnography is more than a method; it reflects and engages, focusing on creating and making something happen and providing means for movement and change. It is a 'way of living and of writing life honestly, complexly, and passionately" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 39).

When a researcher writes an autoethnography, s/he seeks to produce a *dense, aesthetic,* and *evocative* description of personal and interpersonal experience. First, it accomplishes by discerning patterns of cultural experience that emerge from field notes, interviews, and artifacts. These patterns are then described using storytelling strategies (e.g., character and plot

development), showing and telling, and altering the author's voice (Ellis, 2015). Thus, the autoethnographers try to make the personal experience meaningful and committed to cultural understanding. By producing accessible texts, they may also reach a broader and more diverse audience than traditional research generally does not take into account. Thus, this movement can make personal and social change possible for more people (Ellis, 2010; Lloyd Goodall, 2006; hooks, 1996).

When examining a wide range of autoethnographic scholarship to identify a set of features that such inquiry holds in common, I found that autoethnographers use personal experiences as primary data to expand the understanding of social phenomena; autoethnographic processes can vary and result in different writing products. For Jones et al. (2016), whether autoethnography starts from the researcher's professional interests or personal experience, it is helpful to keep a running list of compelling experiences, professional curiosities, nagging issues, and intense emotions. Of course, the ultimate decisions about the research topics and methods lie with the individual autoethnographers. The autonomy of individual autoethnographer enables them to delve into their personal experiences as deeply and widely as they desire. Therefore, as autoethnography uses different processes and is produced in various formats and writing styles, as a transnational scholar and educator, and for this work, I consider it pertinent to use writing as a method of inquiry. Next, I address both *writing as method* and *writing stories and personal narratives evocatively* (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) aligned to the *path of Conocimiento* (Anzaldua & Keating, 2013).

Writing as Method

Qualitative researchers use principles of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both a process and a product (Ellis et

al., 2010). Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) state, "qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading" (p. 1411). To create vital texts and make a difference within the qualitative community, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) outline this dual notion of process and product in *Writing: A Method of Inquiry*. They emphasize writing is a legitimate and scholarly method to be held to high standards. Thus, writing as a method of inquiry emerged since they noticed that qualitative researchers

> undercut writing as a dynamic creative process. They undermined the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research was inconsistent with the writing model, and they contributed to the flotilla of qualitative writing that was not interesting to read because writers wrote in the homogenized voice of science. (Richard & St. Pierre 2005, p. 1411)

Qualitative researchers need to have individual research skills and aptitudes since the researcher is the instrument, the more honed the researcher, the better the possibility of excellent research. In the past, students were taught to be open, observe, listen, question, and participate, but they were limited to nurturing their writing voices. During the past decade, however, rather than suppressing their voices, qualitative writers have been honing their writing skills. Learning to write in new ways does not take away one's traditional writing skills; instead, all kinds of qualitative writing have flourished (Richard & St. Pierre 2005). A clear example of this is Anzaldua's (2015) work, in which she states writing is a "process of discovery and perception that produces knowledge and *Conocimiento* (insight)" (p.1). Writing undertakes that desire and urgency to communicate, to make meaning and to make sense of things, to create oneself through a *knowledge-producing act* (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, p.1)

On the one hand, language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and the self (Richard & St. Pierre, 2005). Thus, writing things involve value; no writing performance is involuntary. Moreover, writing styles are neither fixed nor neutral but reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. According to Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. However, language is the centerpiece. They emphasize that language does not reflect social reality but instead produces meaning and creates social reality. Language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs one's subjectivity in historically and locally specific ways. Because the "individual is subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, one's subjectivity is shifting and contradictory; not stable, fixed, and rigid" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 1414).

Thus, poststructuralism points to the continual cocreation of the self and social science and invites researchers to reflect on the method and explore new ways of knowing. Specifically, poststructuralism suggests two essential ideas to qualitative writers. First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times. Second, it frees us from writing a single text in which everything says at once to everyone. "Nurturing our voices releases the censorious hold of *science writing* on our consciousness as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche; writing is validated as a method of knowing" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 1414).

On the other hand, Anzaldúa closely associates language with the matter. In her ontology, language does not simply refer to or represent reality, nor does it become a reality in some ludic postmodernist way. Instead, words, images, and material things are real, embodying different aspects of reality, ranging from the ordinary reality of everyday life (in its physical, nonphysical,

and semi-physical iterations) to what Anzaldua describes as "the hidden spirit worlds" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 223). Language is a critical strand in Anzaldúa's onto-epistemology and aesthetics, a cornerstone of sorts. Because language, the physical world, the imaginal, and nonordinary realities are all intimately interwoven; words and images matter and are matter. They can have a causal materializing force. The intentional, ritualized performance of specific, carefully selected terms has the potential to shift reality (and not just our perception of fact) (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013). Anzaldua's aesthetics enables writers and other artists to enact, materialize, and in different ways concretize transformation. For Anzaldúa, writing is ontological, intimately connected with physical and nonphysical beings, with ordinary and non-ordinary realities.

In this perspective, the ethnographic genre has been blurred, enlarged, and altered, with researchers writing in different formats for various audiences. However, these ethnographies are like each other, i.e., they produce through creative-analytical practices, which Richardson (2003) calls *creative analytical processes* (CAPs). Therefore, works that create CAP ethnography are both innovative and analytical. For example, there is a diversity of new ethnographic work under this notion: autoethnography, fiction, poetry, drama, readers' theater, writing stories, aphorisms, layered texts, conversations, epistles, polyvocal texts, comedy, allegory, visual texts, and more. Thus, with many outlets for presentation and publication, CAP ethnographies herald a paradigm shift (Bochner & Ellis, 1996).

Therefore, CAP ethnography displays the writing process and the product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. For Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), there is no such thing as "getting it right," only "getting it" differently contoured and nuanced. When using CAP ethnographies, researchers draw from literary, artistic, and scientific genres, often breaking the

boundaries of those genres. It is important to empathize that there are many practices from which to choose, and we (qualitative) researchers should not be constrained by the habits of somebody else's mind.

In short, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) acknowledge that the "sacrosanctity of social science writing conventions [have] been challenged" through the growth of CAPs (p. 962). As they argue, "science is one lens, and creative arts is another," and that "CAP ethnographies are not alternative or experimental; they are, in and of themselves, valid and desirable representations of the social" (p. 962). Furthermore, they acknowledge these CAP ethnographies still hold to a high-level expectation of rigor and that "mere novelty does not suffice" (p. 964). To account for this, they maintain the following standards when reviewing CAP ethnographies:

1. *Substantive Contribution.* Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social scientific perspective? Does this piece seem "true" --a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the "real?"

2. *Aesthetic merit.* Rather than reducing standards, another standard is added. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does this use of creative analytical practices open up the text and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

3. *Reflexivity.* How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Does the author hold himself or herself accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied?

4. *Impact.* Does this piece affect me emotionally or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to write? Does it move me to try new research practices or move me to action? (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 964)

Under these four CAPs criteria and acknowledging that science is one lens, and creative arts is another, I intended to look through both lenses by using writing as a method of inquiry for my transnational autoethnographic work. In my position as an international scholar migrant coming from a different social background and Latin-American culture, I have been exposed to experience the social world through two territorial lenses (North and South). That is why I started approaching writing as a method first, to bring light to my transnational voice. Then, using theory, analytical-reflective practices, and diverse membership, I aim to advocate for and join those academic members in the same position as I, coming from non-dominant worlds (Latin America), intent on insisting that our knowledge is honored and respected.

Within the perspective there is no such thing as *getting it right*, only *getting it* differently contoured and nuanced when writing autoethnography narratives, I move forward with the writing style I pursue to employ for my ethnographic reflective/records (Ellis et al., 2015). These narratives will align to my progressive (holometabolous) metamorphosis when living transnational personal and academic experiences by undergoing the *seven states of Conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Writing as Product: Stories and Personal Narratives Evocatively Aligned to Path of Conocimiento

There are a variety of modes that autoethnographers use to write about that what they study. These align with how a knowledge system disciplines itself, its members, and methods for claiming authority over the subject matter and its members. When writing personal narratives

and stories, it is essential to find concrete practices to construct oneself as an ethical subject engaged in ethical ethnography, inspiring to read and write (Ellis et al., 2015). These practices include working within theoretical schemata (transnationalism and path of Conocimiento) that challenge authority grounds (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Besides, when writing personal narratives, the autoethnographer considers a topic that matters both personally and collectively, experiencing enjoyment with different writing formats and audiences simultaneously, locating oneself in multiple discourses and communities, and developing critical literacy.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) encourage qualitative researchers to find ways of writing less hierarchical and univocal. Thus, we autoethnographers center on what we want to accomplish by participating in self-reflection and giving in to synchronicity. We honor work personification and spatiality without returning from our writing modes (emotional, spiritual, reflective, critical, etc.). Therefore, when keeping the location of the self, the autoethnographer builds *writing stories* (Richardson, 2005). These narratives place writing in other parts of life, such as disciplinary constraints, academic debates, departmental politics, social movements, community structures, research interests, family ties, and personal history. In this sense, writing stories offer *critical reflexivity* on the self that writes in different contexts as a valuable *creative, analytical* practice. They evoke new questions about the self and the subject, remind researchers that our work is grounded, contextual and rhizomatic, and demystify the research-writing process and help others do the same. Besides, writing personal narratives evokes deeper parts of the self, healing wounds, enhancing the sense of self, or even altering the meaning of identity (Ellis et al., 2015; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

In this perspective, there are many different modes of writing, ranging from a more literary-artistic style to a more scientific-analytical style, which autoethnographers adapt

successfully (Jones et al., 2016). However, for my t*ransnational critical-reflective ethnographic narratives* (writing stories), I plan to incorporate evocative patterns related to the evocative autoethnography writing style (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Evocative autoethnography as a writing product consists of esthetic and evocative text that uses techniques through which it is possible to show the thoughts, emotions, and actions of those who star in them for the audience to experience that same experience or a part of it. Generally short and written in the first person, these texts are present in various formats: poetry, short stories, fiction, novels, or photographic essays and sometimes with all or several of them in one. Therefore, writing a narrative text should be evocative, often revealing hidden details of private life and highlighting the emotional experience (Ellis et al., 2015). Another aspect of evocative autoethnography is that the focus of observation should be located in a particular case, ideally that of the person who investigates.

On the other hand, writing personal stories can be therapeutic for authors as we write to make sense of ourselves and our experiences (Kiesinger, 2002; Poulos, 2008). We purge our burdens (Atkinson, 2007) and question canonical, conventional, authoritarian, and projective stories that argue how ideal social beings should live (Bochner, 2001, 2002; Tololyan, 1987). In this view, Anzaldúa (2015) illustrates that constructing experiences and emotions through language makes life tolerable and meaningful. It allows us to escape our condition through fantasy, only to find ourselves confronting the situation we are trying to escape. Thus, while she *escribe para idear* (writing for ideas), Anzaldúa reflects on her own experience and calls for new aesthetics. She interweaves theory with practices, an entirely embodied artistic practice synthesizing *identity formation* with *cultural change* and movement among *multiple realities*.

Anzaldua's narratives aspire to evoke healing and transformation by using words, images, and theories beyond description and representation; to stimulate, create and facilitate

radical physical-psychic change in herself, her readers, and various worlds in which we exist and to which we aspire. In the same way, I also aim to evoke healing and transformation when writing my stories and personal narratives regarding my transnational metamorphosis experiences. That is why I aspire to build my autoethnographic narratives as a product founded on the *seven stages of the Conocimiento* (Anzaldua & Keating, 2013) pathway. *Now let us shift ..the path of conocimiento .. inner work..public acts is an essay in the collection This bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation (*Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 117). This essay which composes the *seven stages of Conocimiento*, represents the culmination of Anzaldua's intellectual-ontological-political journey, a significant example of her theory of autohistoria-teoria and aesthetics.

Conocimiento translated to English means knowledge, but Anzaldua redefines the term, incorporating imaginal, spiritual-activist, and ontological dimensions. *Conocimiento* denotes an intensely personal, fully embodied process that gathers information from context. Anzaldúa's *Conocimiento* is profoundly relational and enables those who enact it to make connections among apparently disparate events, people, experiences, and realities. These connections, in turn, lead to action. Through personal experiences, Anzaldúa presents a nonlinear healing journey through the seven stages of Conocimiento, a series of recursive iterations implicating a walkway to change. It guides every one of us to start from *within* and use our *inner selves* in *spiritual activism*. These seven separate stages of higher consciousness allow one's mind and all senses to operate to process information. These seven stages, which are alternative ways of knowing and feeling, are:

1. *El arrebato* is a rupture, fragmentation, wounding. It usually means an ending, but more importantly, a beginning. This stage is triggered by significant life changes, such as a

breakup. As individuals, we are forced to reanalyze the life we thought we meant to live. We must dissect our identity and break it down to form a new identity. These kinds of life changes make us question who we are fundamentally in the world. Thus, this first stage also awakens *la facultad* (the ability) to see more profoundly than the surface of situations, representing the sixth sense of awareness (Anzaldúa, 2002).

2. *Nepantla-torn between ways*, this stage occurs once an individual commits to search for something new and entails a whirlwind process, where various choices result in internal conflicts, and our beliefs are questioned. It means living in borderlands, feeling torn between two ways (identities).

3. The Coatlicue state- desconocimiento and the cost of knowing. Anzaldúa describes the goddess Coatlicue as a powerful image that inhabits her psyche. The Coatlicue state can be a way station or a way of life. This stage allows us to make meaning out of our greatest disappointments and painful experiences, leading us to become more who we are. When in the Coatlicue state, one goes into a higher consciousness of inner self which Anzaldúa describes as a *paralyzed psychological state*. One faces a lot of self-reflection to come into our skin. Knowledge makes us more aware and more conscious. "Knowing is painful because I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable after it happens. I am no longer the same person I was before" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 68). It is a rebirth of the new sense of self. Coatlicue slows us up so the psyche can assimilate previous experiences and process the changes.

4. The call- el compromise- the crossing and conversation. During this state, the individual reconnects with the world. It represents a turning point on the path to transformation by releasing old identities, beliefs, fears, and perspectives, facilitating a healing process. It follows that if one is not limited by our race, class, gender, or sexual identity, the body is more

than the categories that mark us. Leaving the body reinforces the mind/body, matter/spirit dichotomy that we try to show does not exist in reality. One must have passion for completing this stage and let go of the stagnant parts of ourselves; give up the too comfortable and out modeled factors.

5. *Putting Coyolxauhqui together- new personal and collective stories*. This space includes a desire to sort through lived experiences, establish a new identity that utilizes necessary resources, and navigate a new reality. This stage is full of new personal and collective stories as a process of reconstruction. As well it involves putting the pieces back together. Here the self is reinvented from the destruction. Anzaldúa encourages her readers to see that people are multi-cultural instead of fitting into limited categories. Everyone is subject to change. We can interpret and reinterpret how we see ourselves.

6. *The blow-up … a clash of realities.* In this stage, the individual enters the world with the new identity, only to be at odds with the world and unable to utilize needed resources. Here la nepantlera, where the outer boundaries of the mind's inner life meet the external world of reality, is a zone of possibility. The individual experiences reality as fluid, expanding and contracting. In nepantla, one is exposed, open to other perspectives, and more readily accesses knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events and sees through them with mindful, holistic awareness. In this stage, one can teach mindfulness to others around us to help smooth our frustrating thoughts and feelings. Stage six is full of more optimism than the previous stages, where we are inspired to grow and change. Feelings of love, happiness, and peace surround the individual.

7. *Shifting realities-acting out the vision of spiritual activism.* This final stage is where the individual develops strategies to negotiate future conflicts and enacts a social justice

epistemology. Anzaldúa describes this stage as the last move through and away from the pain. It is healing the wounds. One gives forgiveness when needed. From this point, individuals have endured the painful first six stages where they are forced to confront complicated feelings and experiences within. After analyzing these experiences, that individual can come out more robust, with new strategies to apply fearlessly to the things found in stage one, a significant life change or conflict. Here is where change happens (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Together, the seven stages open the senses and enlarge the breadth and depth of consciousness, causing internal shifts and external changes. All seven are present within each step, and they occur concurrently, chronologically or not. Zigzagging from ignorance (desconocimiento) to awareness (Conocimiento), a person may go through all seven stages in a day or may dwell in one for months. We are never only in one space, but partially in one, partially in another, with nepantla occurring most often as its own space and as the transition between the others. Anzaldúa highlights that together; these stations constitute a "meditation on the rites of passage, changes of life from birth to death, and all the daily births and deaths in-between. Bits of yourself die and are reborn in each step" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2013, p. 546).

Through this *path of Conocimiento*, I disclosed my *writing stories* as a transnational scholar navigating socio-cultural and academic activities and practices in multiple spheres. To fulfill this purpose, I followed the guidelines that autoethnography suggests. My writing as a product proceeded as a story. It followed a way of chronologically telling the events (typical of the biographical genre), using characters, a plot, literary sequence, poetry, reflexive and dramatic tension, and evocative style (typical of the narrative genre). On this, there are narratives that are more or less short stories in which I operate as an author and researcher (autoethnographer) through the use of metaphors, literary figures, dialogues, or accompanied by other voices; I

related a concrete experience of myself (autobiographical). Thus, my transnational reflective-evocative narratives allowed access to the facts and participate cognitively and emotionally in them.

However, in Ellis and Bochner's (2000) opinion, the most relevant of autoethnography, for whom the narratives present as stories, must create the effect of reality and show the complexity of human life experiences and conflicts. Then the narratives are a way of rejecting the chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalization, and incoherence of our lives, preserving or restoring their continuity and coherence in the face of the unexpected blows of destiny (Montagud, 2016). For autoethnographers, these are the types of texts of evocative narratives.

For Bochner and Ellis (2016), the evocative term "contrasts expressive and dialogical objectives with the more traditional and representative orientations of the social sciences" (p. 744). In them, the story detaches from academic jargon and theoretical abstraction to privilege "stories over analysis, allowing and favoring alternative readings and multiple interpretations" (pp. 744-745). Thus, the texts should encourage those who read them to feel the integrity of their stories, to become participants, hooking them to the thread of a tale morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually. There are innumerable written exercises in which that same spirit invoked from those in the early nineties to the most recent.

Therefore, those who research and write autoethnographies must produce dense, aesthetic, and evocative descriptions of personal experience and the relationships established with other people to reach more extensive and diverse audiences than traditional research (Ellis et al., 2011). To do this, I intended to alternate the characters' points of view, incorporate dialogues, add poetry and include photographs. Everything contributed to the awareness and meaning of the

narratives. With my evocative narrative writings, I did not intend to theorize or generalize about a case, at least not in the sense that we are used to but to produce meaningful, accessible, and transnational suggestive research that allows "experiencing an experience" (Ellis, 1993, p. 711).

My objective for writing as a product, evocative-reflective narratives is to transmit my transformative life experiences in transnational contexts through the path of knowledge. Thus, to turn it into a thread that would allow me to analyze some of the elements in which I think those limits of political-social intervention reside. Thus, reflecting on the self to underline opinions about the result of first-person experience and expressing such a condition, becoming the object of the same investigation. I also aspired to convey this particular life connects to others that share the same fate and troubles of experiencing and living colonial and post-colonial sociocultural and educational practices. Thus, this is to coincide with those who were also limited to acquire equal and quality education as a practice of freedom, democracy, and justice, mainly in Latin-American educational systems mirroring Ecuador's post-colonial and traditional academic structures.

I intended to discover, put life into my stories, give meaning and a voice to the experiences that define the identity of those involved in international or transnational academic mobility in the different professional fields are configured, especially in education; my intellectual habitat for years. Besides, I aimed to recognize how my past educational training process livings clashed with the reality of other spaces. I aspired to face the problems and obstacles simultaneously that, as the protagonist, I discovered when writing my narratives. It made me reflect on making my own decisions. It was all to show the processes that, in my opinion, lead us, mobile academic migrants and immigrants in general, to live the seven stages of

the *path of Conocimiento*, always aspiring and acting for societal and educational change for *Buen Vivir.*

Consequently, to present a genre of autoethnographic writing that, at minimum, places the author's lived experiences within a social and cultural context (Jones et al., 2016), it was essential to apply related methods for data collection in qualitative inquiry. Since I sought to increase understanding and gave meaning to my narratives to reveal my(self) as a central character with rich emotional evocation, next, I describe the data collection methods I applied for my transnational reflective stories.

Making Meaning of Transnational Narratives Through Sites of Data Collection

Autoethnographic inquiry incorporates many standard traditional qualitative data collection forms such as field notes, interviews, observations, and personal documents (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jones et al., 2016). But such data are often collected and incorporated into analysis in autoethnographic projects differently than from traditional ethnographic work. Autoethnographic inquiry integrates distinctive features of the new language of qualitative methods (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997), including the "visibility of researcher's self, strong reflexivity, relational engagement, personal vulnerability, and open-ended rejection of finality and closure" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 58). Thus, autoethnographers can gather data in various ways: recalling, collecting artifacts and documents, interviewing others, analyzing self, observing self, and reflecting on issues about the research topic. According to Jones et al. (2016),

> Recalling is a free-spirited way of bringing out memories about critical events, people, place, behaviors, talks, thoughts, perspectives, opinions, and emotions pertaining to the research topic. Physical evidence of the past, such as memorabilia, photos, multimedia materials, official records, and texts including blogs, personal journals and newspaper

articles, can stimulate the researchers' multiple senses to connect the present to the past. They can help researchers capture "snapshots" of memories. (Muncey, 2010, p. 55 as cited in Jones et al., 2016, p. 114)

In this perspective, autoethnographic data collection does not have to be a solitary activity. Instead, we autoethnographers can interview others involved in our studies and others related to our research topic. Under these qualitative data gathering parameters, my data collection involved personal memory, self-observational, and self-reflective and external raw data (Chang, 2016) I have collected throughout my ten years (década ganada) of experiencing transnational academic mobilities. My external data including textual artifacts consisted of:

1. My tangible work as an academic mobile graduate student. These are files from all of my coursework and related studies. It includes my digital data storage as an international/transnational graduate student at Kansas State University (KSU), starting with my application to the Go teachers' program in 2013, to my most recent documents, such as this dissertation work and all of its drafts. Also included within this are my internship experiences within North American education settings and the corresponding records from those experiences. It also includes emails from my inbox and printed items, and field notes that I have kept related to my coursework and scholarship responsibilities.

2. *My written notes as an academic mobile graduate student and EFL teacher*. These range from my digital and analog underlining, highlights, and notes scribbled on sticky notes and in the margins of my books or downloaded journal articles to my digital notepad stored across my phone, computer, and tablet. I will use them to track my reflexive-evocative writing stories and narrative research thoughts and ideas.

3. *My tangible work as a transnational teacher and a Graduate Teacher Assistant* (GTA). My teaching career includes curriculum framework, institutional policies, syllabus, lesson plans, handouts, PowerPoints, etc. In addition, I had digitally stored files from when I taught English as a foreign language in Ecuadorian public education at the middle, high school, and higher education levels. I will also include students' writing assignments, emails, websites, syllabus, and factsheets collected through my work as a GTA. Since confidentiality refers to the need to keep identifiable information about individuals private (Wiles, 2013), I will apply anonymity, which is a way students' data will be kept confidential. However, intentional disclosures of information may be necessary for certain circumstances and I will obtain students' permission to reveal the data.

4. *My work as an EFL teacher and Coordinator of the English Department at the Universidad Nacional de Education (UNAE) Azogues-Ecuador*. This data has solid links and overlaps with my EFL teacher's work in other public and private educational institutions in both USA and Ecuador. However, there are distinct differences in the type of work I had to do in UNAE. I was consciously involved in research projects, professional development programs, educational conferences and workshops, meetings with colleagues, administrators, and authorities. I currently have significant digital files related to this work and a compendium of related materials, files, and email messages.

5. *Multimedia and visual resources*. These include audio, videos, photos, images, textbooks, graphs, etc., that I have collected throughout nine years of living back and forth between the USA and Ecuador (2013-2021). In addition, I have been experiencing transnational processes and activities within socio-cultural, political, economic, and academic spaces (Manhattan-Kansas and Azogues-Ecuador).

6. *My memories* and international, transnational, and migratory lived experiences as they pertain to each stage of my *path of Conocimiento*.

7. *My lived experiences*. As an international/transnational academic migrant, I have extensive lived experiences between proposal and dissertation completion across all of these topics. My experiences are mainly my immigration status, socio-cultural diversity, international designations, a professional and academic career in transnational spaces, and transnational identity capital. Some of these experiences created tangible data, while others did not.

These are the specific sites of data collection that informed this transnational autoethnographic inquiry. I added one more, which is recalling that is a free-spirited way of bringing out memories about critical events, people, places, behaviors, talks, thoughts, perspectives, opinions, and emotions (Jones et al., 2016) about my research purpose. Physical evidence of the past, such as memorabilia, photos, multimedia materials, official records, texts, personal journals, and newspaper articles, stimulated my multiple senses to connect the present to the past. They helped me capture *snapshots of memories* (Muncey, 2010, p. 55).

Since this transnational autoethnographic develops in a nontraditional dissertation framework, these substantial sites of tangible data collection provided significant understanding, meaning, and self-reflectivity of my overall story. Thus, the audience know how the path of my transnational metamorphosis occurred when reading this academic work with Latina-mestiza cultural nuances.

Now, there are different ways in which one can approach data management and analysis in qualitative research. However, when applying a particular data analysis approach, there should be adequate depth and justification to detail how one could identify findings in one's study.

Since data management and analysis occurs throughout one's study or even before the actual execution of the study, I address how I made meaning and understanding of my lived experiences when I become a transnational purple butterfly.

Emerging Meaning Through Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data management is how a researcher manages a large volume of data. Often this "process could include chunking small analytic units from the larger body of raw data for closer analysis" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 149). Thus, data analysis involves creating processes that allow for deep insights that reflect the researcher's integrated theoretical and analytical frameworks, the previous understanding of literature, and the focus of the research purpose and questions. These deep insights can often lead to identifying findings in a qualitative study (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Therefore, to conduct my data analysis, I applied an inductive data analysis process used in qualitative research by adapting my data collection and management aligned to Chang's (2016) *strategies for self-narratives data collection*. The analysis method aided by a combination of (self) *narrative portraits analytical strategy* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), *writing as a method of inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and *theory-driven analytical features* (Bhattacharya, 2014*)* that assisted me identifying aspect specific to my research questions.

Autoethnography has opened spaces for incorporating *creative arts-based* approaches (Anzaldúa, 2015; Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016; Leavy, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and this non-traditional doctoral dissertation embraces those creative possibilities. Creative approaches include new ways of thinking about data, space, voice, writing style, and the integration of creative genres of data illustration and the documentation of the knowledge construction process. Apart from adding aesthetic merit, these innovative approaches open new

ways for the audience and readers to see and interact with complex sociocultural lived experiences. They also intend to enhance the impact on the reader to help move people to action (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Thus, the representation of my self-narrative data analysis draws in the *arts-based approaches* to educational research (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2012), which integrate tenets from the creative arts into academic work. These approaches are valued and effective in "expressing the multiplicity of lived experiences in nuanced, complex ways while also remaining accessible and evoking emotional connections" (Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 21). Besides, tenets of the *portraiture methodology* (Travis, 2020) and *narrative portraiture* (Rodriguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020) intersect with art-based methods embody my self-narrative findings. By creatively designing a self-portrait painting with *two-dimensional visual art* (Wang et al., 2017), I capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of my ten years of transnational academic experiences. Moreover, this artwork, which I identify as my *transnational academic metamorphic self-portrait painting*, merges my identity, transnational decolonizing voice, and spirit essence existing among multiple spaces and realities. Mainly, the significance of this self-portrait is that it responds to the research questions by enacting, materializing, and concretizing the concept of the transnational progressive learner about the intersectional ethnographic spaces where I interact. Likewise, it informs interpretations of postcolonial educational practices and the achievement of academic excellence for a culture of living under the notions of *Buen Vivir*. Consequently, my self-narrative findings involve a *poetic representation* (Butler-Kisber, 2017) since poetic positions allow for a more personal conversation tone. It is significant for creative autoethnographic projects as authors need to provide enough self-exposure (vulnerability) to

adequately inform the reader and expose the nuances of the sociocultural-academic intersections that I interrogated in this autoethnographic study.

My main goal for applying the (self) *narrative portraits analytical strategy* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), *writing as a method of inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and *theory-driven analytical features* (Bhattacharya, 2014*)* processes for my data analysis is to achieve the standards for CAP ethnographies in qualitative research*: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflectivity, and impact* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Moreover, as it is a scholarly work, I aspire to generate the same rigor, deep, thick, rich, salient, and literary narratives expected from social researchers for generations. Ultimately, by focusing on the research purpose, questions, and theoretical frameworks inherently attached to the descriptions I intend to produce, I prevent my transnational autoethnography work from being viewed as a mere novelty (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p.964). Instead, the audience reading my work would understand that my truth, reality, and making-meaning constructed on understanding my (two) worlds, experiences, interaction with events, and other circumstances in my transnational academic lifespan. Thus, my truth, realities, and meanings would be relative, situated, and context-driven.

Summary

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now (Denzin, 2013). Autoethnography conventionalizes the narrative expression of life experiences. These conventions, which structure how life experiences are performed, told, and, written about, involve the following problematic presuppositions and taken-for-granted assumptions: (1) the existence of others; (2) the influence and importance of the race, gender, and class; (3) family beginnings; (4) turning points; (5) known and knowing authors and

observers; (6) objective life markers; (7) real persons with real lives; (8) turning- point experiences; and (9) truthful statements distinguished from fictions (Denzin, 2013, p. 7). Thus, these conventions serve to define the autoethnographic method as a distinct approach to studying human experience. It is a method by which the "real" appearances of "real" people create (Denzin, 2013, p. 7). They are Western literary conventions and have been present since the (auto) biographical form.

Under this perspective, I construct and develop this transnational *reflective-evocative autoethnography* with *critical nuances*. Through my performances and narratives, I aim to demonstrate that I am a "moral being, present in the world, ahead of myself, occupied and preoccupied with everyday doings and emotional practices" (Denzin, 1984, p. 91). With my writing style as process and product, I navigate those narratively structured, liminal, existential spaces in the *transnational culture* and *path of Conocimiento*. The different data collection sites were my vehicle for ongoing understanding, reflectivity, criticism, evocation, and interpretation of my storied events and accounts—these were rearranged chronologically into multiple and differing forms and layers of meaningful experiences.

Since a story that is told is never the same story that is heard, each teller speaks from a biographical position that is unique and, in a sense, unshareable. Likewise, each hearer of a story hears from a similarly unshareable position. However, these two versions of the story merge and run together into a collective, group version of the story. Therefore, there are only multiple versions of shareable and unshareable personal experiences (Denzin, 2013). No single life story or self-autobiography grasps or covers all that life is for a person. Therefore, there are only numerous stories to be told. We are, as Heidegger (1962) reminds us, talking beings, and we live and talk our way into being through the poetic, narrative structures of our language. It's not that

our language tells our stories for us; instead, we appropriate language for our discursive purposes.

Then I own my language to tell my story.

Chapter 4 - Deconstructing Postcolonial Educational Scars while Constructing my Transnational Identity by Living the Seven States of Conocimiento

Introduction

My experiences from the past have nourished my education; it would be ungrateful to define my past as entirely unsatisfactory; however, to understand why my desire to fly, I must acknowledge where I originated. Living experiences as an evolving transnational academic through the *seven states of Conocimiento* have prompted me to constantly self-reflect and persistently self-question:

What does it mean to emerge from a traditional educational system from a country identified as the third world?

Here is my reflection

My education
inspired by concepts and principles of traditional school
with a robust behavioral component
that reproduces a way of thinking and acting
based on stimulus-response or action-reaction

With active practices of "surveillance and punishing,"
with lessons taught in creed
through strict curriculum and authorized textbooks
turning the classrooms into "Golden cages,"
while imprisoning minds and souls
within an agonizing learning scheme

My traditional education
based on "magistrocentrismo"
whose leading provider

of information and knowledge
was the teacher
the axis of information,
the holder of truth and wisdom,
the central element,
within an authoritarian posture,
"filled out" students
with rigid concepts acquired over time
which could not be discussed or negotiated
positioning themselves as the only ones
with the absolute truth and intellect

My passive education
committed to memory with some variations
between excessive repetition
and memorization of information
obediently under postcolonial rules
I took down dictations,
memorized the creed,
and reproduced it orally and thoroughly
prohibited were the mistakes
as illegal was the reflection, dialogue,
critical view, or collective construction
causing "ruptures" in the formation
of my critical thinking
it distorted meaningful learning experiences

My repetitive education
fostered by verbalism and passivity
with methodological crises and
scarcity of teaching means

the expository and mechanical teaching methods
demanded the mechanization of information,
offered isolated, segmented,
and disconnected content from reality
however, the more information,
the better my education.
with the only allied resources:
the text, notebook, and blackboard
the same teaching structures
to everyone in every setting
an agonizing routine practices

My based-grading education
with evaluations involving encyclopedic memory
systematized, categorized,
and scheduled within the school manual
evaluations with numerical order
deliberating my intelligence
if distraction and confusion are to be avoided,
no answer would come out outside the scoring guidebook,
evaluations where my "affective filter" at its maximum level
was reflected in the *hojas de papel ministro de lineas y cuadros*
(White exam paper sheets)
an agonizing evaluation system

Predominantly
my anti-relationship education
nurtured by unequal relations philosophies
between student and teacher
with governing concepts between
the one who commands and the one who obeys

the one looking from above and the other from below
Obedience and submission were the virtues to achieve,
warranting a "privileged teacher-student correlation,"
an agonizing divorcing system

According to Anzaldúa (2015), the *seven states of the path of Conocimiento* make sense and meaning based on the reality of each person's life. In my case, periodically moving backward and forwards among each state has been a learning possibility for deconstructing and reconstructing experiences echoing my past and present. Living among transnational academic mobilities drove me to a painful and simultaneous satisfying progressive/*holometabolous* metamorphic process, or as I have interpreted, originating as an *Azogueña caterpillar* to self-manifest *as a transnational butterfly.*

I challenged myself to recognize and disclose critically postcolonial educational background experiences, which meant tearing apart the comfort zone of my childhood, adolescence, and phases of my professional career as an educator in which I had been living for many years. Otherwise, I would be complicit in supporting and perpetuating systems of dominance and oppression that have been and still are prevailing within most educational systems in South America and other societies. The deconstruction and deliberation of my past experiences within traditional educational structures open the pathway for understanding and making meaning of my path of *conocimiento* by reviving my academic spirit. It allows me to represent experiences from my transnational being and redefine my identity as an Ecuadorian professional woman with postcolonial educational scars.

Therefore, opening up my historical education scars meant reconstructing and transferring knowledge by integrating the *here* and *there*, *before* and *after.* This reenactment process led me to consciously reflect on existential identity issues within the socio-cultural and

academic environments that I relate with. While mirroring my past and present learning involvements, it seemed that different identities or several "*Yos"* (I's) lived within me without clarifying themselves and making it challenging to define them. For instance, I thought of that social-cultural "I" that seeks to fit into all its environments simultaneously. In turn, there was that more intimate "I," with its own needs, contradictions, and vulnerabilities. Finally, that hopeful "I," aspiring to consolidate spiritual activism, achieve dreams, and make particular and collective goals and aims come true.

Defining identity can be challenging and could last a lifetime. However, reconstructing the practices of my previous education where I emerged from has not been an easy mission throughout my ten years of academic and non-academic transnational experiences. It has been a process of maturation and enduring in which my identity has forged with particular relevance within emotional, spiritual components, recognition, and appreciation of myself. In addition, it has involved revealing my being, emotionally undressing, removing endless layers, resistances, and armor to reach that private territory where I can reside with authenticity.

This authenticity reflects this chapter, where I critically self-reflect and bring meaning to my three transitional academic mobilities or *chrysalises* as I have interpreted them, *Go-teacher, Master and Ph.D. reconstructive programs*, which embodies my spiritual rebirth from being in shadows. For Anzaldúa (2015), transitions are a "form of crisis, an emotionally significant event or a radical change in status"(p. 17). In this sense, my academic transitions through the seven states of *conocimiento* led me to connect with myself, reinvent myself, be resilient, and consciously accept all that I have become aware of and learned about my being, essence, and existence. Mainly, each of my transnational academic journeys represents movements I have

embraced, always aspiring to reach to the depth of my consciousness and zigzagging from *desconocimiento* (ignorance) to awareness (*conocimiento*) (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Thus, reconstructing my new identity, comprising a puzzle of hundreds of pieces fitting together compliant with my experiences through emotions, thoughts, values, desires, decisions, and actions. Therefore, the scars of my past education were valuable to find that internal harmony between all those interior pieces within a process of stability, acceptance, self-love, inner strength, and a touch of illusion. As the formation of my new (transnational) identity has been an ongoing process, it has not been a snapshot and static image but a state that has been and continues to be in constant growth. From there, hope and optimism have remained firm to shape my metamorphosis with a brighter identity capable of achieving an active educator spirit that advocates for that education for *Buen Vivir* in society.

In addition, in this chapter, I intend to value those moments of introspection, self-reflection in solitude, and profound recognition of my lived realities in two different worlds (North and South America), which led me to fundamental knowledge through self-knowledge. This self-knowledge has been framed in a logical, formal, and rational context by "shifting from hard, scientific, explicitly codified knowledge to organic, intrinsic, implicit, reflexive, spatialized knowledge-namely embodied and encultured knowledge" (Kim, 2010, p. 589), which defines my *transnational identity capital.*

Within this context, through self-reflection, self-knowledge, from unconscious to conscious thoughts and actions, ignorance and shadows, I become aware of the scope of my acts recorded during my academic past and from my experiences lived through border crossings. Finally, I reveal how my in-between realities sponsored endless, mindful, and heartfully transnational learning activities through active modeling mechanisms manifested in this

autoethnographic study. For Anzaldúa (2013), "you can't change the reality, but you can change your attitude toward it, your interpretation of it." (p.131). Indeed, this is my interpretative reality where I started, how I have lived it, and where I intend to fly.

Healing and Renewing my Self-educational Spirit by Nurturing Inside my Chrysalises

From my first academic scholarship program, my lived experiences have been grounded on corporeal realities and epistemologies laced with theory and actions. However, ten years of cultural and intellectual interconnectedness has altered my life on almost every level. They have progressively conducted me to re-examine my self-definition, my relationship to my body, mind, and spirit, my teaching-learning procedures, my worldview, and the possibilities of developing a transcultural identity with a *new mestiza consciousness* (Anzaldúa, 2009).

Anzaldúa (2013) transformed the hyper-consciousness of interconnectedness by conceptualizing seven stages of *conocimiento,* which means opening the senses causing internal shifts and external changes. This *conocimiento* motivates "you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing" (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 558). Besides, the seven stages symbolize the four stages of the alchemical process (nigredo, albedo, citrinitas, and rubedo). Jung (1960) describes these as *Confession, Illumination, Education*, and *Transformation* in psychological terms. Thus, the seven stages, coupled with my three academic journeys, interweave within this path of *conocimiento* and awareness.

Through this process of attaining hyper-consciousness, I have advanced reflecting consciously to disclose the experiential evidence of my decolonizing academic journeys. It brings understanding to my progressive transformations and consciousness shifts about beliefs systems that supported and perpetuated postcolonial educational systems of oppressions,

demarcations, injustices, inequalities, and social class privileges sustained by supremacist and capitalist patriarchal ideologies. Unpacking my *personal reflective/ narrative* (Ellis, 2004) by writing my ethnographies through my *path of Conocimiento* is a form of activism. It intends to create an opportunity for healing, transforming, and advocating for positive social change by dissolving the boundaries that divide us and, in turn, building bridges over physical, material, psychological, and territorial walls. Thus, creating a shared culture of mutual care and respect while still celebrating our differences.

Since Anzaldúa's work resonates with me academically and spiritually, her deep-rooted soulful writings provided me the *conocimiento* (knowledge/awareness) to understand and recognize my false sense of identity of living in this state of confusion and abandonment (*desconocimiento*). And the need to want to change for the better-inward and outward, as she proclaims,

> tu camino desconocimiento requires that you encounter your shadow side and confront what you've programmed yourself (and have been programmed by your cultures) to avoid (desconocer), to confront the traits and habits distorting how you see reality and inhibiting the full use of your facultades. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 540)

Through her and other scholars inspired by her work, I have encountered my shadow side when confronting dominant and oppressive structures of my past education sustained by the colonial legacy, which has programmed me to be comfortable with the status quo. Nevertheless, it has allowed me to become conscious of *la facultad* (ability) to discern my prior experiences within my socio-cultural context before my transnational journeys. For Anzaldúa (2009), *la facultad* is more of a feeling than being consciously aware. It is an intuitive form of knowledge that goes beyond logical thought and empirical analysis.

> It is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning...an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings. (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 321)

These images and logos, as Anzaldúa so eloquently describes, are the driving force in what we say, hear, see, and feel in this project toward a hyper-awareness, toward *conocimiento*. For the "spirit speaks through our mouth, listens through our ears, sees through our eyes, touches with our hands," (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 558).

Thus, Anzaldúa's epistemology, spirituality, and artistic storytelling abilities are essential to this study. It has provided me with *la facultad* to break into the dominant (academic) cultural models and paradigms. As Anzaldúa uses code-switching to bridge with particular audiences, its application also allows me to create a dialogue of my transnational experiences with marginalized (Spanish speakers) cultures with which I have shared meaning and spaces. As a native Spanish speaker, through my code-switching (English- Spanish), I honor and value my identity over the language of the dominant discourse as the new paradigm must come from outside and within the system (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 541). With my narratives, I embrace *positive shadow* (Anzaldúa, 2015), offering a humanizing bridge with those experiencing or who have lived in each stage of *conocimiento* at some point in their lives.

Within the *autohistoria-theoria*, is an approach coined by Anzaldúa referring to a personal narrative*, testimonio*, factual accounts, cuento, and poetry that transcends the status quo. Throughout my transnational academic activities, I share my stories of living in-between cultures, lost and disordered in each state. With my *testimonios*, I intend this study to be social

and relational by redeeming my rupture experiences and transforming them into something valuable so others can also be empowered (Anzaldúa, 2013), as well as encourage other voices to share their stories and allow readers and audiences to empathize with different views, belief systems, identities, or (transnational) experiences.

Beginning of the Journey Root as Azogueña Caterpillar

Experiencing Arrebatos Under my Emigrant Identity

Figure 4.1 Family gathering and the farewell toast

When seeing this image (Figure 4.1) about an *arrebato* in my life, my vulnerable self loses control and awakes in me that *facultad* to make meaning on this subsequent statement,

> *Auque no lo entiendas, aprende a confiar en lo que esta ocurriendo. Si la tormenta se acerca a la montaña no es para maldecirla, es para entregarle el don de su florecimiento (Arnau de Tera).*
>
> "Even if you don't understand it, learn to trust what is happening. If the storm approaches the mountain, it is not to curse it, but to give it the gift of its blossoming" (Arnau de Tera, 2021).

That trust in which I would support myself at that moment of my life was fading at the same time that I thanked my father for his such emotional and heartfelt toast while giving my last hug to my loved ones voicing to them, “I’ll return soon.” Just like the fragment of a song that comes to my mind now—

> "a year is not a century love, time will pass, I will return because it is difficult to live without your love" (Verdaguer, 1976).

Then, trying to hide my vulnerability with great desolation, I detached myself from the home where I had grown up and “matured” among manifestations of unconditional love, protection, attention, corrections, and teachings. Although unfortunately, some of them had set patterns fortified by the white Spanish colonial legacy and the *mestizaje* (mestizo race) as my parents’ legitimate heritage.

As Fúlquez (2011) declares, the family is presented as the basic unit of society and is the first social nucleus of coexistence for the human being. My family context represents that core where I learned my emotional knowledge base from my parents and my *emotional identification* and *regulation* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It has been and continues to be a crucial role in developing my values, skills, and competencies, serving as a model for my emotional interactions and the maturation of my cognitive parts linked to awareness and knowledge. I have been privileged to build a solid affective base with my family to open myself to the physical and social world with security and self-confidence. Besides, it has been a facilitator of an adequate “cognitive and psychosocial evolution” (Ferrándiz et al., 2011, p. 129), which manifests itself in this stage of my life.

Goleman (1996) states that family life is the cradle where the individual begins to feel himself and learns how others react to feelings. It is the space where one learns to think about

oneself, feelings, and the possible responses to certain situations. In these circumstances, my family means that essential condition with referential figures for me to optimally advance my socialization (between two worlds). Therefore, it has been my first school for emotional literacy and the essential context where my affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences developed (Nuñez, 2007, p. 49).

Those same emotive and emotional competencies were being violated for a specific cause linked to my continuing education and one of the objectives of the *Década ganada* government. It was to promote student mobility programs and apply professional development programs and continuous preparation processes at an interregional and international level to generate academic excellence, exchange networks, and knowledge production. Under these circumstances, I began my ten years of academic transnationalism that I interpret and represent also as my *won decade.* Thus, with my first border crossing into tierras extranjeras (foreign lands), as my father would say, in January 2013, I was destined to live my first experience by going through the first stage of my path of Conocimiento: *el arrebato, rupture, fragmentation, an ending, a beginning.*

El arrebato stage for Anzaldúa is about chaos. Every *arrebato* is "a violent attack, rift with a loved one, illness, death in the family, betrayal, systematic racism, marginalization, and (*immigration*)- rips you from your *familiar "home"* (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 125). She explains, "each *arrebato* turns your world upside down and cracks the walls of your reality, resulting in a great sense of loss, grief, and emptiness, leaving behind dreams, hopes, goals" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 125). Besides, when an *arrebato* occurs, one feels like an orphan, abandoned by all that is familiar and habitual. It is feeling exposed, naked, disoriented, wounded, uncertain, confused, and conflicted, and you are forced to live "on the shore- a razor-sharp edge that fragments you" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 125).

I have been through many *arrebatos* along the way of my transnational travels. However, the most wounding and disoriented rupture encompasses the terms *emigrate* and *immigrate* and all it implies. It no longer represented just words I used to hear on the radio or the television news when referring to people who leave their familiar "home" to cross borders (legal or illegal) with the desire to achieve that proclaimed *Sueño Americano* (American dream). These are two contradictory words where pain and hope are juxtaposed for us immigrants. However, more fragmentations for those underprivileged immigrants who feel guilty for their social condition in an insensitive, incomprehensible, and unfair society. Now, I was beginning to experience the meaning of being an *emigrant* and an *immigrant* in my flesh.

On this, I clearly remember my father always expressed to the family,

"Ese sueño Americano se puede lograr tambien aqui en tu propia tierra con dedicación y esfuerzo todo es posbile de alcanzar aqui mismo."

"That American dream can be achieved here in your land with dedication, and effort, everything is possible to achieve right here."

Although my (privileged) migratory situation had a different implication than other immigrants within my society, I know what he meant. He preached with his example. That same spirit motivated me, as the worm-like caterpillar that wraps itself in a cocoon for weeks then emerges as a beautiful butterfly, to emerge from being his Azogueña caterpillar to make the transition to my cocoon stage. However, unfortunately, it meant turning my *familiar "home*" (Anzaldúa, 2015) upside down, weakening my confidence in my academic goals to be achieved in the short term.

My first transition resulted in a great sense of loss, grief, emptiness, abandonment, disoriented, confusion, and wounded (Anzaldúa, 2015). I felt guilty for hurting my loved ones

when I *desacunaba* (uncradled) by leaving my comfort zone, social and cultural attachments, language, getting out of the bubble, as my son would say. To cocoon into a strange, foreign, different, divergent territory (world) from mine.

Although the territorial spaces, both the familiar one and the foreigner, are geographically identified under the same name, “America,” and being naive, I thought I was part of America; and it turns out that this is not the case. I became aware that I am not from America; I come from South America. On this matter, I remember that my high school teachers used a map to teach me that America was the continent's name located in the western hemisphere of the Earth. Its limits consist of the Pacific (west), Atlantic (east), and Arctic (north) oceans, and the Diego Ramírez Islands (south). Due to its vastness, America was divided into South America, Central America, and North America, and the United States is the most populous country in America. In addition, the most widely spoken language in America was Spanish. That information was consciously saved in my long-term memory and, to me, was the only valid one until I arrived in America (North America). That concept was overshadowed, mainly when doing my reflective assignments.

So, the rupture of the migratory grief is, as Anzaldúa manifests, "a violent attack that cracks the walls of your reality" (2015, p. 125). My reality at that time was harrowing because I was leaving behind that solid center of God’s plan for happiness and progress, my family.

As if from above, I was given too much, I tell myself as I write these lines (as Latina family-oriented). My family unit has meant and still denotes the manifestation of unconditional support, perpetual union in spirit, permanent sustenance to guarantee my enjoyment of the blessings that come from the creator’s heart (love, respect, and fidelity). For Anzaldúa, the path of *conocimiento* requires that we confront what we have programmed ourselves (and have been

programmed by our cultures). It was absurd to think that I was programmed to face the challenge of a painful transition such as physical disconnection from family and estrangement from home. Whatever the circumstances of leaving our *familiar "home*," it is hard to conceive that we are programmed to deal with such fragmentation in any culture.

Although I was aware that my *emotional identification* and the affective bond with them were not at risk, it seemed that it was, especially when playing an essential role in a family, such as being a mother, and even more critical when being a single mother. Living the rupture from my position as daughter and sister was painful. However, this next *arrebato* embodies my mourning from the status of an emigrant but as a single mother.

Living away from home is having a big heart
that sometimes fears
that loved ones (my son) have forgotten you,
because the present has taken control of (his) life.

Years ago, it was painful and disgraceful for me to refer to this stage of my life, and I even avoided talking about it with my family. Because putting it in Gabriel Garcia Márquez's words, "I was still too young to know that the heart's memory eliminates the bad and magnifies the good, and that thanks to this artifice we manage to endure the burden of the past" (1997, p. 100). However, over time, I have learned to face and cope with the past of my youth. Becoming a single mother at my young age (21 years old) in a society that described it as illegitimate, immoral, extra-nuptial, or extra-marital shame is another arrebato that I went through. I would think of disclosing in its moment because it still hurts a little. However, I would reveal the most significant facts to understand my transnational academic experiences.

During my emigrant birth (2013), my family consisted of my father, mother, two sisters, three brothers, and son. Gratefully, since he was born, my son has been surrounded by the love

and care of my family. Until he was nine years old, I had lived with him in the comfort of my parents' home. In my society, it is a cultural and natural norm for children to live with their parents until certain ages in their adulthood. There are many reasons for this, but it is not up for discussion now. The crucial point is that the most heartbreaking experience of my transnational experiences would come. It was to get the Cañari woman's courage (brave and determined) I carried inside to reassure my big heart, *hacerme de shungu duro* (make me braveheart) as my mom would say. And live the rift with my loved one, my son, by leaving him to God's will, the care of my family, and the performance of society.

Some separations occur in a painful and distorted way and create wounds forever. I felt this was one of them. My main fear was that the relationship and interconnection with my son, which was recently maturing and blooming, would end with my departure. Indeed, the family bond had to be reformulated because, as I had been his maternal and paternal figure, it seemed he was being abandoned (although he was not), thus dislocating the meaning of the home where he was growing up. As a daughter, I was leaving my parents' home but mainly departing from the home I had cradled myself with my son.

Even though this physical distancing seemed to be duly validated and justified, my soul's physical pain was inevitable, knowing that the triggers of this breakup would be irreconcilable for my son. The expectations that everything would be fine and that I was leaving him for a guaranteed and supported cause (academic excellence) had been intensely fragmented. At the same time, the promise that I would return soon was sealed with his last kiss and hug. Feeling my son's pain caused by my migratory *arrebato* was as Anzaldúa exposes:

> Your relationship with the world irrevocably changed. You were aware of your vulnerability, no longer trusting the universe. It was like it was casting you out of your

> personal Eden, showing that something was lacking in your queendom. This episode led to reinterpreting the story you imagined yourself living, bringing it to a dramatic end and initiating one of turmoil, being swallowed by your fears, and passing through a threshold, seeing how your culture separates you from the herd exiles you from the tribe wounds you psychologically and spiritually. (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 124)

Thus, I had to cast my mind and heart to find a symbol to represent this dislocation, and it was the *Go teacher program at Kansas State University*. As in the story of the green caterpillar, Beth had to sacrifice and effort herself to climb the big trees to get the most nutritious leaves, which would make her grow strong and healthy until getting her pair of beautiful red wings. I had to border cross from south to north to let time pass in my chrysalis in which my metamorphosis would take place. However, for this to happen, the fragmentation with my family, especially with my son, would be the first and most painful sacrifice that I would have to go through, and I say first because many more would come in the future. Learning to survive this type of arrebato has been part of my growth and transformation in this transnational academic space.

My new identity emerged with this rupture of causal emigration experience; I became an international student (EFL teacher). Although under certain privileges but still an immigrant. This thought completely resonates with my transnational experiences:

> "*To emigrate is to disappear and then be reborn; to immigrate is to be reborn so as not to disappear*"
>
> "Emigrar es desaparecer para despúes renacer; inmigrar es renacer para no desaparecer" (Samí Naïr, 2000, p. 19)

A Clash of Two Realities

In the first stage of the path of *conocimiento (*arrebato), Anzaldúa points out that with the loss of the *familiar "home"* and the unknown ahead, one struggles to regain oneself balance reintegrate oneself and repair the damage. She indicates:

> You must, like the shaman, find a way to call your spirit home. Every paroxysm has the potential to initiate you to something new, giving you a chance to reconstruct yourself, forcing you to rework your description of self, world, and your place in it (reality). You honor what has ended, say good-bye to the old way of being, commit yourself to look for the "something new," and picture yourself embracing this new life. But before that can happen, you plunge into the ambiguity of the transition phase, undergo another rite of passage, and negotiate another identity crisis. (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp. 125-126)

After leaving my *familiar "home*," I had to face my new reality by finding a way to reintegrate myself and mend the harm by committing to welcome the unique experiences that would come with my first academic mobility. Thus, I underwent another rite of passage in this transition phase and negotiated another identity crisis. It was that of becoming an international graduate student or *Go-teacher* (scholar), as the faculty and staff of the Center for Intercultural and Multilingual Advocacy (*CIMA*) identified us in the College of Education of the Kansas State University (KSU) of the United States of America.

With my immersion in the *K-state family*, I catapulted into *nepantla*, which occurs once an individual commits to search for something new (Anzaldúa, 2002). *Nepantla torn between ways* is the second stage of *Conocimiento* which means to be in this "liminal transitional space, suspended between shifts, where you are two people, split between before and after" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 122). Nepantla is a word from the Uto-Aztecan language family. According to Nahuatl, Nepantla means the space between two bodies of water, the distance between two worlds

(Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 276). Thus, within *conocimiento,* nepantla is an in-between space that entails self-reflection and the ability to see through restrictive societal limitations. The individual dis-identifies with previous beliefs and begins to transform individually and beyond. "Nepantla is a stage that women and men, and whoever is willing to change into a new person and further grow and develop, go through" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 276). People in this space are pulled between opposing realities feeling split between what they once knew true through culture, family, friends, and the new and vastly different culture.

When experiencing this state of nepantla for the first time, I was not sure that I was willing and ready for change and transformation, or instead, I was not aware that if something had to be changed, what and how would it be. At first, submitting to change would be challenging and risky without having matured sufficiently the idea of being exposed, open to other perspectives, more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events. To "see through "them with mindful, holistic awareness" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 122). Because remember, I came with wounds and scars left by my post-colonial educational past in my school years. As an *EFL caterpillar teacher*, I came from obediently transmitting those post-colonial "teachings" to my students. In addition, being open to other perspectives intimidated me due to the ties that I brought with me from the conservative and radical post-colonial society where I originated. Especially enclosed by a male-dominated culture in which its ideological practices continue in many other present cultures today.

Empathizing with hooks' (1996) declaration, "most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we encouraged to believe was universal" (p. 35). It is how I had matured and endured as a passive student within the *banking system* (Freire, 1993) of education for twenty-two years.

During my first twelve school years, obedience to authority was the predominant skill to achieve. The following six years in middle and high school, there was much enthusiasm for teaching and learning through repetition, memory, and passivity. Finally, in my last four years as an undergraduate student, I lived between obedience, memorization, divorce between teacher and student, and unfair and inequitable academic rituals due to the domination of the elites in power. Accepting the teaching profession as my calling, during the four years that my teaching degree program would last, I was already well prepared, equipped and adapted to the reality of the classroom dynamics I had known as an elementary, middle, and high schooler.

Indeed, in college, my classrooms became the space where I was encouraged to conform, favor, accustom, and imitate teaching practices and behaviors as hegemonic acts. It was a fundamental way to preserve the perpetual society of classes, where those classes emerged from the differences of education. Thus, I had experienced educational processes aimed at preparing human beings to obey the authority (government, policymakers, the board of education, principals, teachers), a means of maintaining *social stratification* (public, private, rural, urban, suburban students), and distinct positions within societies (high, medium, low economic status). Those educational contexts made me feel "satisfied" and "intelligent" through conventional and undemocratic teaching-learning practices. It was similar to the structure of the Lancasterian system (Spring, 2005), introduced into charity schools in the United States and England in the early nineteenth century and landed into Latin American educational systems.

Under this Lancasterian (factory system) system of education, I formed my teaching principles and foundations to transfer into my future professional career as an EFL teacher. For better or worse, these factory system seeds with postcolonial orientation were rooted in me when I graduated from college with my bachelor's degree in Education Sciences specializing in

English Language and Literature. I was proud of achieving my career degree under this education structure because that was my reality, and with what I had to "progress and grow" within the educational world.

Consequently, still not recovered from my scars that revealed my academic past, I started with my metamorphic evolutionary process by encapsulating myself into the *Go-teacher program* as my *first chrysalis* (golden pupa of the butterfly). The Go-teacher project was a scholarship program developed to enhance the English proficiency of teachers in Ecuador. Through this program, Go-teachers would improve teaching effectiveness in teaching English as a second language or TESL methodologies. In addition, Go-teacher scholars would experience the culture of the language. The program was funded by the government of Ecuador and was a partnership between Kansas State University, Ecuador's Ministry of Education, and the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, or SENESCYT, Ecuador's governing body higher education.

The Go-Teacher scholarship program directed by *CIMA* welcomed around 106 scholars who comprised the program's third cohort in January 2013. Being part of those scholars, I started the program under the teacher's English as a foreign language in Ecuador identity or more identified as a *Go-teacher*. Until that time, I had been in service within the art of teaching for about seven years. I had experienced my role as a teacher with students of different educational levels from primary to higher education in mostly private institutions. Before my departure, I was in service at the private Catholic university of Cuenca-Azogues. Then as a *Go-teacher*, my primary mission was focused on achieving academic excellence by improving teaching effectiveness in teaching English as a foreign language for the improvement and advancement of Ecuadorian education according to the PNBV Project 2009-2013.

Finding myself immersed in the first-world territory (North America) within a strange and novel socio-cultural, political, economic, but primarily academic space, I immediately experienced moments of culture shock (cultural arrebatos). I considered it a natural cause from moving off my *familiar "home*" to an unfamiliar context. I knew that my academic mobility transition would trigger vortices of cultural change across all genres. I began to experience my new life through the *U-curve of cross-cultural adjustment theory* (Lysgaard, 1955) (the joyfulness and *arrebatos* of adjusting to a new environment). However, already being there in the "anglo world" (Anzaldúa, 2015) I began to be torn between ways.

Considering that I had developed my ability to learn within the traditional conceptual framework, I was also willing to obediently memorize and repeat the theory within the *Go-teacher* instructional courses. I knew I was prepared for that, but not to confront and criticize the different perspectives that came into conflict about the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from my *familiar "home."* I remember that during my first weeks as a *Go-teacher* within another academic, cultural reality, I was paralyzed, in shock, invaded by outbursts. It was challenging to deal with this clash of cultures and internalize what I was experiencing in those moments where I felt I was living in that liminal space of in-betweenness. I was in this space between opposing realities. Everything was so different on this other side. The words of comparison between *here* and *there* did not faint when appreciating the basic and daily things for the survival of the human being (food, weather, clothing, housing, transport and health services, etc.), which were coauthors of my recent socio-cultural and academic adaptations.

However, a significant cultural arrebato occurred when I was already immersed in the first world educational system, fulfilling my *Go-teacher* role. My first experiences of bridging the differences were captured and impressed by what stood out at first sight: the campus

environment (all purple). The infrastructure of the colleges, the classroom arrangements, equipment of the classrooms, didactic resources seemed easily accessible, the technological *privilege* in most of the spaces, the library services and study areas, and the pantry room (the lifesaver in difficult student moments). It was the "privilege" of being an international student in "America."

However, it became problematic to start living in this "liminal, transitional space, suspended between shifts where my mental, psychological, behavioral, and emotional processes were disturbed when I interacted with my Go-teachers' professors and classmates inside and outside the classroom. Nevertheless, gradually I began to deconstruct the wounds of my past education and rebuild with new learning from the program. Many reflections on this academic reconstruction and how I assimilated it as I interacted with it will focus on the most significant for understanding this stage of my metamorphic process.

When experiencing nepantla means dis-identifies with previous beliefs and beginning to transform. My self-deconstruction started with a particular case. On the first day of the class, one of my English Language Proficiency (ELP) department instructors shared a syllabus format that was very new to me. Still, I would know that it would have a purpose. This syllabus was active and particularly informative (living syllabus, as my philosophy teacher has coined it), nothing compared to the *familiar "home*" if there was one. The characteristics of this syllabus made me self-reflect and become aware of the importance of considering relevant criteria that I would consider unnecessary in the past. After concurrent interaction, I began to give it a meaning and interpretive value beyond being informative or evaluative or a simple instructional requirement. For me, that syllabus model meant planning, organization, efficiency, coordination, anticipation, execution (not improvisation), negotiation, reality, time, context, and mainly contributing to

adequate communication and high expectations within the classroom. Perhaps it would seem that this appreciation is very simple or insignificant for someone. Still, for me, it represents a significant planning model that contributed to the reconstruction of my future teaching practices. This reasoning echoes in a reflection section of one of my classes.

"After understanding the importance of planning and preparation, I realize how important it is to continue learning and what it means to be an effective teacher".

With the familiarization of this syllabus format, I became fully involved in learning innovative teaching and learning practices that interested me the most since I was immersed in the English culture and had to self-motivate to gain an in-depth understanding of the language and its application. At the same time, I was in the beginnings of the reconstruction of my educator self. From class to class, I was learning to heal my scars, free myself from my past ties, and renew myself by interiorizing my professors' teaching practices within the program. As an example, I reflect on the thought of one of my professors who taught me that practical wisdom is knowing what is best, right, or good in a particular context (Vontz, 2015). I would believe that the practical wisdom of most of my professors to transmit their knowledge was aligned with both the context (my context) and the reasons for the decision they made when teaching us. I understood that it is not the kind of knowledge we selectively apply; it is a knowledge we carry with us at all times. It is based on our past experiences, values, moral sensibilities, and knowledge of ideas brought to bear on a particular problem.

Improving my English teaching and transmitting it in the Ecuadorian educational context was the priority. Thus, through ELP classes and particular college courses, I began to think critically and consciously to decolonize my mental, psychological, and spiritual self from educational schemes/barriers from my past. Although my cognitive and intellectual selves

prioritized improving the English language and learning the new teaching approaches, methods, and strategies, I had not entirely developed *la facultad* to break into the dominant (academic) culture models and paradigms. My hyper-consciousness had not reached its potential to open my senses to cause internal shifts and external changes fully yet. However, I had assimilated the most significant and valuable teaching-learning practices to fulfill the purpose of my first academic mobility. Mainly through my daily interaction within the *College of Education* space, I reached a level of awareness of wanting to teach differently from how I had been taught. Thus, it helped me deconstruct and rebuild my teaching philosophy which I interpret as follows

My teaching philosophy
Constructive teacher-student relationship
Of mutual recognition
stimulating trust, mutual respect, empathy, caring
by making students feel free to speak their minds
share their thoughts, feelings, and desires
take the risk and feel safe to meet their potential
by valuing themselves for who they are
while embracing the difference of others
cultivating an integral classroom relationship

Genuine interest in the well-being of my student
Students do not fill well in a formula
recognizing that all are unique with individual lives
so responsively value every- one's presence
because every opinion deserves representation, validation,
appreciate everyone influences the classroom dynamic
as everyone contributes with their authenticity

Rethink what, how and what we teach for?

Using innovative teaching to construct meaning,
process new learning, and foster critical thinking,
through purposeful pedagogical strategies
that reflect and respect
learning styles, needs, and interests of ordinary life,
encouraging ways of thinking and understanding
an authentic student-center learning environment

Biography Driving Instruction (BDI) method
maximizes learner's potential for language acquisition,
and content learning
By drawing upon student's sociocultural,
linguistic, academic and cognitive resources
students find the pleasure of learning,
acquire knowledge through meaningful and
real-life activities that make significant changes
for the betterment of the students
those who are striving for learning

Nepantla is the zone between changes where we struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and our inner relationship to it (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 127). By being pulled between opposing realities, I felt torn between "white ways" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 127) and conservative postcolonial Hispanic ways. As I tried to digest and give new meaning to my learnings within the program, I felt suspended between traditional principles and radical beliefs; I did not know whether to integrate, separate, or isolate.

As a *Go-teacher scholar*, I had been in this intellectual, epistemological transitional space where I engaged in moments of critical awareness. Feeling it as a point of departure for critical engagement in social injustices within education since my transformation was taking place by

starting to see things from different and new perspectives. However, I was doubtful I would overcome those boundaries that I had carried with me for so long. There were many matters to reconstruct when I would return to the instructional practice in my *familiar "home*." I was afraid of not being genuinely committed to resisting the "authority and power" because I knew I would be at risk if an act of resistance would challenge the status quo. But I had a renewed spirit and mind, an intellectual guide, and a vision and mission that freed me from my ties healed my first scars by producing conscious changes that would later reflect when linking awareness with practice.

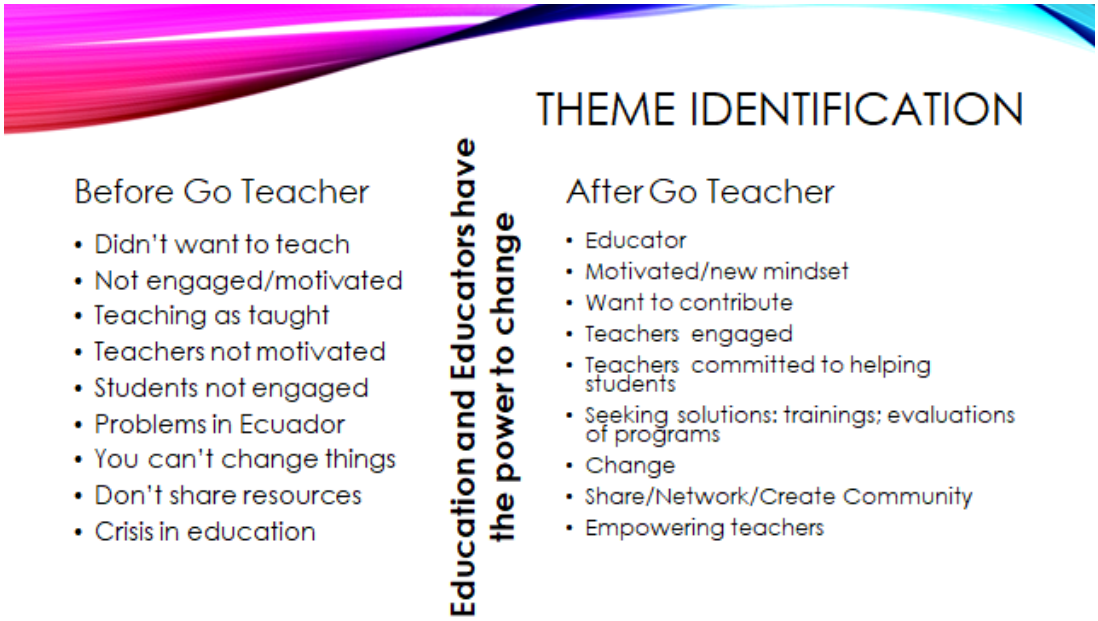
In the transition space of nepantla, one reflects critically, and as one moves from one symbol system to another, self-identity becomes a central concern. While the opposing forces struggle for expression, an inner impasse blocks us. According to Jung (2014), a new identity emerges if we hold opposites long enough without taking sides. During eight months living in Nepantla within the *Go-teacher chrysalis*, my self-identity evolved to such an extent that it became a process of maturation and continuous change as I went through the other states of the path of knowledge due to my academic mobilities.

According to Anzaldúa (2002), living between cultures (north and south America) results in "seeing" double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Thus, seeing simultaneously from two or more perspectives renders those cultures transparent. Then removed from the culture's center, we glimpse the sea in which we have been immersed but to which we were oblivious, no longer seeing the world the way we were enculturated to see it. A new cultural arrebato was looming at the end of the *Go- teacher* program. I would return to my *familiar "home"* by living another *rupture* of leaving the space no

longer "unfamiliar" that has already taken another meaning. I would thank the *K- state family* for its hospitality and generosity.

I would come back, but I was no longer the Azogueña caterpillar, I had been half-metamorphosed, but I would continue its process as long as I had my *big heart* to do it. Therefore, with the outcomes from a duo-ethnographic project conducted during my qualitative class, I present my classmate's interpretation of me before and after wrapping myself in my chrysalis (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Interpretation of my before and after the Go-teacher academic program experiences.



By interpreting my before and after, I acknowledge that being in the state of Nepantla is experiencing "an unstable, unpredictable precarious" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p.1) and an uncomfortable space of transition. However, what can be accomplished in Nepantla is the ability to construct bridges that "span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 1), and it is in these in-between spaces where transformation occurs. However, these transformations are often challenging to navigate; yet it is one that many social justice actors

encounter. Therefore, it is likely that in the social justice arena (teaching field), there would be moments when one can move into the third stage, Coatlicue.

The Cost of Knowing in a New Reality

The immigrant's return is a new migration since upon returning to the *familiar "home,"* which has also changed in specific ways, one feels like a foreigner for the changes produced when experiencing Nepantla. As a transnational immigrant, one no longer belongs *here* or *there*, constantly torn between ways. Kim (2010) argues that mobile academic intellectuals living such transnational lives cannot inhabit an immutable nation-home once they become cosmopolitan. Even when they "reside in their own home countries, they are never quite at home again, in the way real locals can be" (Hannerz, 1990, p. 248). This condition resonates when finding myself back to my *familiar "home*" (Azogues-Ecuador). I had to confront an unknown reality among *arrebatos* and *neplanta*. However, a new transition experience awaited me in which I would find myself between identity borders feeling conflicting thoughts. It was unanticipated I had to undergo the *Coatlicue* state.

After concluding the Go-teacher program, the primary commitment of the *becados retornados* (returned scholars) was immediately transferring knowledge to a public education institution. Then through the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education department, I was placed to work in a public urban high school under my new identity, *la profesora Go-teacher* (the Go-teacher teacher). My immigrant transnational identity has influenced daily interactions with my family and around my socio-cultural context. It is so that the transnationalism approach fosters the transfer of values, customs, and attitudes (Mau, et al., 2008) that can benefit the modernization and transformation of the (community) and nation. However, it was more visible when aiming to reconstruct teaching-learning practices through transnational activities such as *knowledge*

transfer, knowledge production, and contact networks focused on achieving academic excellence in my students. Thus, I would be consistent with the purpose of my academic mobility scholarship. This commitment resonates in a reflection paper of my DAS 135 Culture & Language class.

> As a conclusion, I will say that all the knowledge that I have attained throughout my learning process, and experiences have been very useful to apply both in my profession, and in my personal life. But mainly, the new learning I've acquired in this course (program) will help me a lot in the interaction with my students in the classroom. All I have learned here has made me reflect on certain aspects that I did not used to take into account in my teaching process. Now I will have the opportunity to make some changes to improve the relationship with my students. From now, I will prepare my lesson plans, my teaching, considering and respecting their different cultures, religions, races, languages, ethnicities, social statues, and gender.

From that reflection to this academic stage, my growth and evolution in the cognitive, pragmatic, and mainly linguistic fields has been fertile. Certainly, this reflective writing denotes my active spirit for implementing the principles of my reconstructed philosophy of teaching in my context. But unfortunately, it would not be sustainable since the *cost of knowing* would lead me to discover what it is like to be in *Coatlicue*, the third state of my path of knowledge.

Coatlicue, named for a dark Aztec goddess, is a symbol of ancestral and local knowledge deployed by Anzaldúa to register her identification with Aztec culture and her divided self within mestiza reality. Anzaldúa (2002) explains that the *Coatlicue state, desconocimiento* (unknowledge) *and the cost of knowing*, occurs due to an individual living between multiple worlds or cultures in Nepantla. This space "entails dysfunction and self-loathing due to the chaos

caused by living between stories" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 545). It is difficult for the individual to take a step forward in this space because the new knowledge acquired in nepantla changes the person and does not allow her to stay in the previously comfortable zone.

Likewise, in this stage, the exploration of multiple perspectives is imbued, not only with conflict about these perspectives, but also with a process of self-awareness that can be deeply disturbing; as the individual encounters aspects of oneself one does not want to see, acknowledge, or integrate (Bobel et al., 2006, p. 337). Depression, fear, anxiety, despair, and anger can be overwhelming, and there is a temptation to turn away and deny possibilities and new realities or to descend into negative emotions (Aguilar, 2017). It is different from the pain caused by the *arrebato*, in which individuals often find a path for action. Growth is not easy or neat, and one of Anzaldúa's central insights is that experiencing pain is central to the process of coming to awareness.

Upon my return, the transition from *nepantla* to the *coatlicue* state was daunting and hopeless, which plunged me into a new process of self-awareness and self-knowledge while living an unknown reality due to my immersion in a new teaching context. I recall those same feelings of hopelessness echoed in a class discussion among some Ecuadorian colleagues in the *Go-teacher program*. We discussed the innovative methodological strategies that we were learning through technological resources in the class. One of my classmates proved to be unmotivated and resistant to recognizing that those strategies were promising to implement in our future classrooms. I did not know why he showed such resistance, with which I was inspired and confident. Then with his enraged voice, he addressed, "I don't know why you are so enthusiastic that we are learning about these methods; you know that when we are *back to*

reality, we would not be able to implement them in our classes. Don't you know that we hardly have one or two multimedia projectors per school?"

At this moment, I empathized with my colleague's resentment that before I judged him without being aware I had been captivated by my reality of past experiences as an in-service teacher in *private* educational contexts. My understanding is not related to the innovative teaching approaches. However, in the challenge of this intro to heightened awareness causing my identity was fragmented or disintegrate (Anzaldúa, 2002) in the face of social segregation within the Ecuadorian educational system. The vast indicators of inequity and inequality that exist in most public educational institutions were distant from my self-knowledge.

I had worked in private schools' contexts for seven years, experiencing particular institutional "privileges" within the educational space where equal opportunity seemed not strange or unreal. As a student in public institutions with traditionalist paradigms, my ignorance or lack of awareness was justified because, at that time, the technological world was not as developed as until years later when I was already involved in the art of teaching. I had vague references on the management and performance of the public educational system. However, I pretended to know without understanding and pretended to understand without living reality. The unfamiliar reality that I had to face when I immersed myself in the context of public education. The causes that plunged me into the state where I had to pay for the cost of knowing multiple teaching perspectives as a *Go-teacher* were vastly overwhelming. A particular situation led me to fragment myself the first day I started my job at the public school. I remember clearly this biased conversation.

Me: Good morning, señor Director

Principal: Good morning,

Me: My name is EM and I am a *becaria retornada* (returned scholarship recipient) of the Go-teacher program and the district # 6 has placed me to work in this public institution-JVB.

Principal: Do you have the letter of your placement to this institution?

Me: Yes, here you are!

Principal: Wow, but I see that your remuneration would be almost the same as mine, and I've been working here for almost 20 years

Me: (Go-teacher privilege, told myself in my mind)

When hearing that as his first remark, I was in shock, and I could not say anything. It was feeling that my immediate reaction wanted to beat my reasoning, but I felt powerless to say something. After all, I was afraid of encountering aspects of myself that I could not expose because I will regret them later. When narrating this conversation, I reflect on his reasons for such an observation. I wonder if he would say it because I was a woman, "novice" without enough experience, a "privileged" Go-teacher, or because his salary was relatively generous, which I doubt.

As the days went in my new reality, I was experiencing those emotions of being in the Coatlicue state. Depression, fear, anxiety, despair, and anger were overwhelming. The temptation was to turn away and deny possibilities and new realities or descend into negative emotions. I had not had much experience in undertaking issues that arose in my teaching practices due to educational inequality (private vs. public) for the socio-economic stratification in my society. In those situations, I was a complete learner when dealing with the following challenges:

1. School infrastructure: Cold, discolored, battered, impoverished, overlooked

2. Classroom environment: still inspired by concepts and principles of traditional school but with around 40 students per class.
3. Digital and technological divide: Internet access limited and sectioned (only administrative area)
4. A computer lab "equipped" with 20 computers, five were damaged the previous year.
5. Decontextualize curricular programs and alien to social reality.
6. Lesson plans are almost identical among different subjects
7. Social studies teachers teaching English or Math teachers teaching physical education
8. Teachers without opportunities for self-actualization
9. Absence of professional development preparation
10. Teachers exhausted by the workload and distressed to meet the annual plan
11. School authorities with their ego elevated by the power
12. Interest convergence agreements among authorities, teachers, students, and the community.

The *Coatlicue* state is also a state of mind that allows us to take stock and understand the situation we are in. Anzaldúa (2002) explains that "we need Coatlicue to slow us up so that the psyche can assimilate previous experiences and process the changes. If we don't take the time, she'll lay us low with illness, forcing us to rest" (p.68). Likewise, it helps us to make meaning out of "our greatest disappointments and painful experiences…[which] can lead us to becoming more of who we are" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 68). For example, being aware of my unknown reality in public education led me to discover the meaning of my transnational academic experiences. I had to slow up for my psyche to assimilate my previous experiences and process the changes. I needed reflective time to reveal who I had been and who I had become after the *Go-teacher*

experience. And that new me was causing vast disapproval on what I was experiencing in my daily teaching. When Anzaldúa is in the Coatlicue state, she aspires to go into a higher consciousness of her inner self. She describes a *paralyzed psychological state* that forces her to process the pain of oppression she faces daily and either come out a fortified, more resilient woman or let it destroy her.

In this paralyzed psychological state, I was continuously living in the front row the deficiencies in the public sector, some of them particularly evident, for socio-economic and political reasons. Moreover, through this educational context, I had to confront my internal anxieties and fears to understand my new identity as a *Go-teacher* struggling to transfer knowledge. Becoming a minority in my society, I faced a lot of self-reflection to come into my mestiza consciousness.

Social inequality is an obstacle to the right to quality education, manifesting a difference concerning equal opportunities. In most educational centers, the fundamental idea of the teaching and learning process is the same as it was 50 years ago (a teacher explains a lesson to a group of students using a textbook and the support of a blackboard). This traditional model had begun to change in recent years under political agendas to improve the quality of education. However, these programs would remain in limbo with the new government mandate in power. But I would not stay suspended for so long.

> …if I escape conscious awareness, escape knowing, I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware; it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 68)

It was painful and disappointing to feel marginalized because I had the opportunity (privilege) to know more about the other world. Furthermore, it was unfortunate that every time I was eager to teach my class lessons aligned to my new teaching philosophy, those lesson plans failed to be implemented effectively. It was also painful when every consciousness of knowing the unknown is a crossing. I was again an alien in a new territory.

I resisted assimilating a school system that reminded me of the wounds and scars of my traditional education. I refused to go back to being the educator of my past time. I was afraid to return to my comfort zone again. But my major frustration was that of not having that active spirit when I needed to resist the status quo. I could not raise my voice to avoid conflicts, but I lived between internal battles. I no longer felt comfortable knowing two opposite realities, and in the process of my self-awareness, it seemed that my knowledge was not enough for what I aspired to do. Sometimes I felt ashamed of myself for being so oblivious to the social issues within education. I would like to believe all the time in my mind and spirit that I am valuable, but it was impossible, and even though I was working on it, it is a complicated and complex process, step by step, I was going to achieve it. With my first academic mobility, I became aware that one (educator) gets cold due to the absence of spirit. But those academic actors (KSU) with active spirits were there to warm the path of Conocimiento of those of us who did not want to freeze just yet.

The cost of knowing opposing realities within the first world (macro culture) and third world (micro-culture) educational contexts engenders the ability to control perception. I will "call myself to ground this double saber (double knowing) in my body's ear and soul's eye, always alerting how I am aware. Staying awake becomes a survival tool" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 549). My before and after means that I did not fully exist in either world (north /south), instead

of in a fissure that is rarely, if ever, seen by those living within the contrary forces of two worlds. However, with every problematic breath taken and every painful experience exhaled and emitted in this liminal space, we gain "perspective from the cracks. Pain will do that to you; it'll open your eyes to issues and problems you had no idea existed" (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp. 82-84). This hellish experience of being aware of the many deficiencies within the Ecuadorian public educational system is decimating and easy for one to cling to unawareness (ignorance). But I would face my fears and past traumas to move forward in my journeys, risking vulnerability.

> You've learned that delving more fully into your pain, anger, despair, depression, deception will move you through them to the other side, wherever you can use their energy to heal...To reclaim body consciousness, you have to move— go for walks, go out to see the world, engage with the world. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 553)

The Coatlicue state can be a way station or a way of life. I did not want it to be my way of life and let the resistance of new knowledge protect the Spanish/Western colonial legacy of capitalist patriarchy internalized by the oppressed (me as a minority). Anzaldúa (2002) mentions that those affected by the psychological borderlands, of not belonging to one side or the other, will remain paralyzed by the contradictive forces that induce complacency. Any movement toward new knowledge is frightening for those comfortable with inactivity and will not cross over to the conscious world, remaining in contradiction limbo (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 545). I did not want to stay in the contradiction limbo. I had to take action; either I would stay in that space of complete darkness, or else I would recognize my fears and anxieties as signals to make a change and react. Facing despair and self-hatred, not because of my vulnerable condition, but because of the need for a different reality, I required giving new meaning to learned discourses. The spiritual rebirth will be possible because Nepantla is a birth canal leading to Coatlicue as the

creator of all things, from the multiple and complex understanding of the galaxies of meanings (Anzaldúa, 2002). I could not be comfortable with my new reality. Even though it was painful to process this information sometimes, I had to enter the *Coatlicue* state (public teaching context) as a rebirth of the new sense of self, leading me to continue in that call for transformation.

Returning to Reconstruct Myself Inside my Second Chrysalis

The Call for Teaching with Drive, Determination, and Passion

Thinking about what we do and doing what we think is perhaps the best guarantee for living in transformation (Álvarez, 2017). It is not enough to know what we want to get away from when we seek to make deep transformations, and it is essential to know where we want to go. This necessity to rethink, self-reflect, and self-evaluate my academic mobility experiences through the path of *conocimiento* led me to conclude the existence of the circularity between education and teachers.

We change education to the extent that teachers change, and teachers change because education changes; however, this circularity is not closed. Other variables such as budgets, plans, models, leaders, policies, visions, among others, intervene in it. For changing education, teachers must be prepared first. Still, teachers cannot be prepared without accessible training programs, decent salaries, motivation and demands, support groups, clear guidelines, and above all, without teachers who want to change. We all agree that a well-prepared teacher is essential to change the educational act. However, there are no effective teachers when education does not change. It is not uncommon for a group of effective teachers to get caught up in the mediocrity of an environment. Consequently, quality education is a fundamental reason for preparing efficient teachers.

Recursive and systemic circularity is the best way to understand that phenomena have multiple causes: effective teachers change education and that a quality education guarantees us

having effective teachers. From either of these two poles, we can trust in the transformation of education. When pursuing to change education the reductionism, the simple paradigm, magical solutions, or simplistic motivational speeches is useless (Álvarez, 2017). Being nurturing in my first chrysalids (Go-teacher program) made me understand that education makes a bet on humans and has the educational responsibility to bring out the consciousness of humanity in its complexity, diversity, and fragility.

The transition processes for each of the three stages of conocimiento had partially caused internal transformations and external changes in me. Zigzagging from ignorance (unknown) to awareness while the more one knows oneself knows how easy it is to be hurt (Anzaldúa, 2002). Mainly if I thoroughly employ that spirit of wanting to go back where I was invited to think, taught to question myself, and supported me to rebuild myself.

That same spirit of wanting to continue nourishing and rebuilding myself through knowledge and emancipatory learning perspectives led me to take advantage of the right moment to embark on a new path towards transformation through my second academic mobility. Continuously in constant and systematic aspiration of excellence, relevance, optimum knowledge production, the transmission of knowledge, and thinking development through self-criticism, external criticism, and permanent improvement.

In January 2015, I experienced the *arrebato* of leaving my *familiar "home*" for the second time and under the same circumstances. I had met the criteria for a new academic mobility scholarship under the same policies of the knowledge revolution. But this new immigration was less unfamiliar because I was returning to the same space (*K-state family*) where I had begun to reconstruct my scars and I would continue shaping my transnational identity. Thus, I encapsuled myself into my second chrysalis, the *Master's program at KSU.*

Being awarded a second scholarship to effect my master's program was that "call to action that pulls us out of our depression. We break free from our usual coping strategies of escaping from realities we're reluctant to face, reconnect with spirit, and undergo a conversion (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 123). The identity transition from a *Go-teacher scholar* to a *Master's graduate student* led me to experience a new state of knowledge. *The call, the commitment, the crossing, and conversion* is the fourth state where Anzaldúa (2015) stresses that one must have a passion for completing this stage. One must let go of the stagnant parts of their selves; give up the features that are too comfortable and out modeled. It means that one escapes the depressing coping strategies of the third space and reconnects with the world. It represents a turning point on the path to transformation by releasing old identities, beliefs, fears, and perspectives, facilitating a healing process.

Then my mobile academic spirit began to reconnect through my immersion in the *Curriculum & Instruction Master's program* at the *College of Education*. Kim (2017) states that migrants who possess transnational identity capital can be a vital catalyst to generate new knowledge. This knowledge that I intended to achieve in the future could contribute to the creative destruction and reconstruction of the paradigms through my displacement processes (Kim, 2017). With my prior experiences as a *Go-teacher*, I was in the beginnings of developing an orientation as "a reflexive; an in-between stance, that hints at forms of the "objectivity" of an outsider" (Kim, 2017. p. 994).

Thus, my involvement in the Master's program was another possibility of transformation. At this point, I had the passion and resilience to overcome fragmentation and find myself in this new academic journey. For Anzaldúa (2012), "the bridge (the boundary between the world you've just left and the one ahead) is both a barrier and point of transformation. By crossing, you

invite a turning point, initiate a change. And change is never comfortable, easy, or neat. It'll overturn all your relationships, leave behind lover, parent, friend, who, not wanting to disturb the status quo nor lose you, try to keep you from changing" (p. 557).

The academic activities within the master program took a turn toward action, where the embodied experiences of academic mobility start to recognize the transition. Transition truly never stops in this path of *conocimiento*; we are most of the time in nepantla. "This knowing prompts us to shift into a new perception of ourselves and the world. Nothing is fixed. The pulse of existence, the heart of the universe is fluid. Identity, like a river, is always changing, always in transition, always in nepantla" (Anzaldúa, 2013, p. 557). In this stage, I witness the process of becoming aware of a new version of myself. The method of transforming myself was captured in my interaction within the program and mainly represented by developing my final project for the program. The *e-portfolio* was a project that witnessed the capacity of one's own ability to reach of point of transformation for a greater good-to cross a threshold of new possibilities.

Advocating for EFL students by teaching with drive, determination, and passion was my portfolio theme which echoed with this thought "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better" (Maya Angelou, 2003). With that same spirit that now I knew how to do better, I would do better; I returned to the spaces that were no longer so familiar "home" to me.

By experiencing the fourth stage of knowing, there is a conversion and reconnection with spirit. The transformation is achieved when reinterpreting the past, the present changes, recalling those parts of the body left within the transfer's limits. Through the master's courses, I could reinterpret my past experiences lived in the *Coatlicue* stage. Consequently, I was determined not to paralyze my spirit as an educator. Instead, I would bring together all my personal and

collective transnational experiences in a context that did not resist understanding and respecting them.

Putting Guangras Together

> Every day we go out into the community, on horseback or foot, the women carry *"wawas"(*babies), they carry purchases, the animals have injured themselves on the road, sometimes because of fatigue they roll over because of the load, and because of the difficulty of lifting them, they die on-site. (Cajas, Minchala, Soliz, 2017, p. 1)

Figure 4.3 The ruptures of the Guangras community for not having access to a road

Note: La foto N. 4.3 evidencia la difícil situación de los habitantes de la comunidad respecto al camino de acceso a sus hogares.

Guangras is an indigenous community whose inhabitants have lived and still live among *arrebatos* due to social injustices. Indigenous people in *Guangras* confront difficult living conditions because of its geographical location detached from the city. The only "decent"

way to access the community was walking or on horseback. It took them around five hours to get to the nearest town from theirs. The five hours of travel were worthy as long as they could access their primary needs (food, medicine, clothes, public services, etc.). The deprived conditions of this community were the living portrait of social injustice and perpetuating racial discrimination in my society. But unfortunately, this was another reality alien to mine. However, with a redefined self-identity, my "academic status" (Master of Science, Curriculum and Instruction), and a renewed spirit due to my second academic mobility, I would *put Guangras together* by interacting with unknown realities with a new sense of awareness.

After constant intellectual, emotional and spiritual deconstruction and restructuring for a year carrying out transnational activities within the Master's program, I returned to my *familiar "home*." Once again, as a *becaria retornada*, I had to reconnect with my teaching practices within a professional position that would grant me the *privilege* of placing myself within a higher-level educational institution. But this educational space would not be like many others leading the higher education of Ecuadorian citizens. This was the Universidad Nacional de Educación del Ecuador (National University of Education of Ecuador) (*UNAE*).

UNAE was an ambitious project born in higher education under the governmental vision of the Revolución Ciudadana (citizen revolution). With a strategic focus on the transformation of society, the UNAE would bet on the conversion of education. Its mission was to prepare the teachers required by the National Education System for its change, modernization, and instruction in the lines of *Buen Vivir*. It was a project that made the impossible possible because it aimed to prepare the teachers of the future within the line of education as a human right, a public good, and a duty of the State.

That was the contextual profile where I would do better what I had learned to do on my second transnational academic mobility. Think of other ways of conducting my teaching, review the scripts of my various identities, and use them to deconstruct a new reality through investigative intervention. With the mission and vision of this innovative higher education project, I would be experiencing the fifth state of the path of knowledge which is *putting Coyolxauhqui together, new personal and collective "stories."*

The fifth stage, *Coyolxauhqui*, is active transformation, resistance, re-creation, both personal and social. It is a space of analysis to examine and reflect upon the many "should's" (Romero, 2011) and imposed stories received. Intellectual, emotional, and spiritual awareness come together in this reflexive process that critically examines and deconstructs these set stories. Awareness and analysis unfold from personal well-being and from an understanding of the structural and systemic power imbalances that support and maintain these imposed stories. New narratives become possible as one disentangles oneself from these impositions (Romero, 2011). This space engages with nepantla, a rejection of the boundaries and barriers set upon the self, between self, and others.

Through this stage, my process of reconstruction is visible. From my earlier work as a *Go-teacher*, I was resistant to being an accomplice of a wobbly educational system in crisis, imposed by the actors in turn in power. Yet, despite the ruptures within the public educational context, I tried to negotiate ways to (micro) reconstruct my teaching within my classrooms. But sometimes, my disappointments, frustrations, and fears triumphed over my desire to do it. However, on this occasion, I had the privilege of being part of a project where culture and educational policy as merchandise was no longer just a flag of private education but could also be seen in public education.

I was enthusiastic that I would validate my changes and negotiate in a space where I felt inspired. Moreover, academically I felt more prepared to manage my teaching practices and find an avenue to contribute to *UNAE's* educational vision. Thus, positioning as a *becaria retornada* from the master's scholarship, I started to put the pieces back together.

After examining the old self's stance on life/death, misma/otra, individual/collective consciousness, we shift the axis/structure of reference by reversing the polarities, erasing the slash between them, then adding new aspects of ourselves. To make meaning from our experiences, we look through an archetypal psycho-mythos-spiritual lens, charting the various shifts of consciousness as they play out in our daily activities. We use our imagination in mediating between inner and outer experience (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 560).

Experiencing the fifth stage includes a desire for order and sorting through lived experiences to arrange an identity that speaks to a new reality (Anzaldúa, 2002). Finally, this space represents making connections based on the information gained and solving problems to create intercultural communities. Empowered with my new transnational academic experiences and under my identity as a *professor-researcher at UNAE*, I began to navigate within a unique educational reality but now focused on the field of research.

Guangras, the indigenous community, represents the act of calling back those pieces of the self/soul that have been dispersed or lost. It signifies the concomitant unawareness and obliviousness that we cultivate to avoid knowledge and thus remain unaccountable, which has a tenacious hold on us. Certain unknowns came out of the shadows when I ventured to experience new realities through a research project.

I recall I was already in service at UNAE. With a renewed and empowered spirit, I prepared to start my mission to expand my awareness by reconstructing my classroom teaching

and involving myself in research practices. At that time, due to life circumstances, one day, one of my colleagues engaged in journalism and communication in a casual conversation was telling me that he was reporting on the Guangras indigenous community, which I did not know. However, he informed me that it was a subject of much controversy within the social struggles to eradicate discrimination and systematic exclusion of indigenous communities in our society.

That opportune conversation fulfilled my desire for order and meaning that prompted me to track the ongoing circumstances of my life, to sift, sort, and symbolize my transnational experiences and try to arrange them into a pattern and story that speak to my reality. That desire for knowledge about that community activated my investigative spirit. I carried out all the requirements of the research processes to reach another level of consciousness on the social ruptures within this community.

Throughout the investigative process, I had to scan my inner landscape, books, philosophies, mythologies, reflections, and modern sciences in search of fragments of tradition (Anzaldúa, 2015) that I could unite to create a new narrative that articulates my academic and personal transnational reality. However, those scans also caused ruptures in my investigative self as I raised my awareness and knowledge through data that I was discovering regarding the societal issues within indigenous communities.

Statistics from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses-INEC (2015), according to the National Survey of Employment, Unemployment, and Underemployment, confirmed that 62.38% of the population in rural areas suffers from extreme income poverty (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, 2015). In 2015, a study on the causes of death of indigenous Ecuadorians showed that the most common causes of death in children under ten years of age were influenza and pneumonia due to lack of access to health care in these rural communities.

In addition, it revealed that 78.53% of the indigenous people of Ecuador live in rural areas, 35.42% have primary education, and 12.56% have no education (Stefos, 2015).

In Ecuador, the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* was incorporated into the Constitution in 2008, referring to the notion of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) for indigenous people. Later, this concept was implemented by the *National Plan for Good Living 2009-2013*, which sought to improve people's quality of life, developing human beings' capabilities and potential, promoting equality through the redistribution of social goods and the benefits of development. The principle of *Buen Vivir* is the possibility of achieving a better life and building harmony within communities with the universe (Houtart, 2011).

When putting Coyolxauhqui (Guangras) together, one scrutinizes and question dominant and ethnic ideologies and the mindsets their cultures induce in others. And, putting all the pieces together, one re-envisions the map of the known world, creating a new description of reality and scripting a new story. The result of Guangras' research project was the script for my recent history that resulted from being encapsulated within my *two chrysalises* experiencing transformations.

This research project "*The Consequences of the Isolation and Abandonment of the Indigenous Communities in the face of the so-called Good Living: Guangras Uterus of the Cañari Identity*," represents

> the wish to repair and heal and rewrites the stories of loss and recovery, exile and homecoming, disinheritance and recovery that lead out of passivity and into the agency, out of devalued into valued lives. Coyolxauhqui represents the search for new metaphors to tell you what you need to know, how to connect and use the information

gained, and, with intelligence, imagination, and grace, solve your problems and create intercultural communities. (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 143)

By putting Guangras together, I solved my problem of getting out of the indifference and *desconocimiento* on the reality most vulnerable indigenous communities live. Mainly it inspired me to engage both inner and outer resources to make changes on multiple fronts: inner/spiritual/personal, social/collective/material. As Anzaldúa (2015) states, the new stories explore aspects of reality-consciousness, hope, intention, prayer-that traditional science has ignored, deeming these nonexistent as they cannot be tested in a lab. Guangras's story intended to make the rest of the society (like me) aware of the daily ruptures of its people and the consequences of living in an unjust and insensible society where they have historically been marginalized and abandoned because of social classes segregation. However, after some time, hope and intention aligned to my spirit when knowing that Guangras would have an access road, as a "privilege" granted to them for their "good living.", which was one of the main causes for their pain and moral, spiritual, and physical fatigue.

By writing about the always-in-progress, transformational processes and the constant, on-going reconstruction of the way we view our world, we name and ritualize the moments/processes of transition, inserting them into the collective fabric, bringing into play personal history and fashioning a story greater than ourselves (Anzaldúa, 2015). Constant displacement and settlement have ritualized my processes of transition and transformation, causing my transnational stories to become more significant than myself.

Experiencing the Coyolxauhqui stage provoked me to continue growing and transforming by merging the outside and the inside, the other and the self/us, living in the space

of connections that I would experience in a new beginning. I no longer wanted to settle because I had tasted and wanted more.

Emerging a New Mestiza Consciousness to Foster Buen Vivir

New Understandings through Multiple Perspectives

Educational reconstructionists expose that we (educators) cannot solve our problems in a vacuum. Interdependence is a means for developing a world-minded attitude to advance humanity as a whole. The reciprocal relationship between the individual and community is also based on interdependence. Individuals reach their selves only through communication with others and become conscious of their selves only through being mindful of other personalities. (Bussler et al., 1997). The social-self-realization as a form of interdependence is the "realization of the capacity of the self to measure up to its fullest, most satisfying powers in cooperative relationship with other selves" (Bussler et al., 1997, p. 93). For Mead (2015), existence in a community comes before individual consciousness. First, one must participate in the different social positions within society, and only subsequently can one use that experience to take the perspective of others and become self-conscious.

The transnational (academic) mobility exemplifies the interdependence between societies and cultures in which the individual is drawn through communion with others. My persistent transitional movements have led me to experience a clash of social realities, increasing my self-awareness through constructive interdependent relationships derived from my interaction within social and academic events. To live in between societies with reflective consciousness kept me in the process of shifting, negotiating, and confronting new understandings among multiple selves.

My experiences with the Guangras community became a process of self-discovery of perpetual social (Ecuadorian) issues, which altered my mode of interacting and interrelating

through transitional-minded tactics. Witnessing the reality of the underprivileged, I assumed I had made progress, gained a new awareness, found a new version of reality, created a workable story, fulfilled an obligation, and followed my own path of knowledge succinct (Anzaldúa, 2015). However, my *mestiza consciousness* had overlooked and falsely idealized other peoples' (western) realities, threatening my knowledge in a "common ground."

Mestizaje is the Spanish word for "mixture," in other words, mixed ancestries, indigenous and European (primarily Spanish) heritage. However, the *new mestiza* inhabits multiple worlds because of their gender, sexuality, color, class, bodies, personality, spiritual beliefs, and other life experiences (Anzaldúa, 2009). *La mestiza* is a product of transferring one group's cultural and spiritual values to another. Being tricultural, non-lingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the mestiza faces the dilemma of the mixed breed (Cantú et al., 2012). In this sense, la mestiza is in constant shift because living in these multiple worlds, continually swinging out of habitual formations. It means shifting from convergent thinking, linear analytical reasoning to divergent thinking, moving away from setting patterns and goals and toward a whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes (Cantú et al., 2012). My divergent thinking induced my social self and *mestiza consciousness* to look at society differently by carrying out constant transnational activities.

Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their values systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque,* a cultural collision (Anzaldúa, 2009).

I had gone through processes of discovery and reconstruction through my academic programs that helped me free myself from the learning that tied me to a past as destiny. I experienced an internal battle when activating my *mestiza consciousness* upon social struggles distressing the Guangras community. However, it pushed me to better my social consciousness to understand and interpret other realities from an outsider's perspective, which would make my *new mestiza consciousness* emerge. When the Guangras project was nationally recognized as a contributor to interaction mechanisms within the research community, it uplifted my spirit, acknowledging my reconstructing process in my *two chrysalides* was starting to flourish and give fruit. However, it would take me to the beginning of a new transition that would drive me to continue evolving along my path of *conocimiento.*

Thus, my transnational-minded and spiritual attitude drove me to continue deconstructing myself and nurturing my awareness. Then a new displacement came when I transitioned into the sixth stage of Conocimiento by immersing myself in the *Doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction* at the same place that I already considered my home away from home.

The *blow-up, a clash of realities*, is the sixth stage in which "new knowledge occurs through tension, difficulties mistakes and chaos." (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.143). It is the process of bringing new stories into contexts that have not yet been transformed. Finally, *conocimiento* means being oneself, the bridge between perspectives that seem at odds and create divisions in this space. The clash of realities is between multiple others (individuals or groups) and between new understandings and old truths. At this point, my previous academic mobilities embodied in the *Go-teacher* and *Master* programs have instilled in me a desire to continue empowering myself through education in the quest to *Buen Vivir*. As I declared in the closing statement of my Master's program e-portfolio,

These courses have strengthened my understanding and helped me select the appropriate teaching materials that reflect the cultures, biographies, heritages, assets, and goals students bring to the classroom. This platform demonstrates my insight into what it takes to be an effective EFL teacher. A teacher creates a learning environment that emphasizes prior knowledge, creates a context for understanding, makes new concepts relevant, and helps students connect emotionally to what they are learning. I am thankful and feel blessed for being part of this extraordinary learning experience that will move me towards a proactive teacher to chart my instruction, identify barriers, patterns, and strategies, challenge my own beliefs, and avoid repeating the same mistakes. Reflecting on my way of teaching has provided me with more confidence and assertiveness to challenge myself to reach higher levels of correlation between theory and practice. When teaching from the heart, you create a classroom environment where students feel appreciated, valued, and respected. As a teacher, I have magnified the lens through which I view education by perceiving, analyzing, communicating, and sharing knowledge, thoughts, and feelings with my colleagues and professors. This learning experience has given me hope and determination to always teach from the heart and passion in everything I do. The newfound knowledge has increased my confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism for motivating my students to be critical thinkers, risk-takers, explorers, creators, leaders, and successful learners. As I continue on my professional road, my focus will *be to continue growing academically*; the satisfaction from receiving a graduate degree is the opportunity it affords to advocate for what is right in practice. In addition, the challenge and opportunity of writing a platform provide the springboard for

reflecting on what works and is relevant to teaching and learning. Although change is slow; however, we cannot give up on the possibilities.

I had been mentally and emotionally active on learning approaches, methodology, and teaching pedagogy for around 20 months. Still, I had left to a certain extent, my social awareness adrift about social issues that I ignored when interacting within the western society. In my *mestiza consciousness*, I partially inhabited western realities that I had encountered through my participation in socio-cultural events. However, my reflective critical thinking and self-awareness would fire when I found myself plunged into a new academic journey, *my third chrysalis* (Ph.D. program), where the p*urple transitional butterfly* with *new mestiza consciousness* would be reincarnated.

Throughout my doctoral program, I was motivated to reach my selves when mindful of multiple personalities by active classroom interactions and daily life events. In the sixth stage of *conocimiento*, the process of bringing one's new stories out into the world embodies all the other spaces all over again, as an *el arrebato* one experiences from this clash of realities, and the resulting difficult emotions create temptations to withdraw. But again, there is a call to action and a recognition of the possibilities for transformation.

Each time the new knowledge led my mestiza consciousness to experience moments of tension, difficulties, mistakes, and chaos. I had to confront sudden awareness under a new identity as an (international/transnational) doctoral graduate. My *psychological borders* (Anzaldúa, 1997) pulled toward constructing new ways of resolving the tensions of inner-conflict, bringing about social awareness with the new determination, and meeting resistance while at the peak of uncertainty.

Frequent doubts, hesitations, fears, and frustrations invaded my being when facing multiple perspectives, personalities, identities, genders within classrooms. I was almost always the only *Latina mestiza* soul within a predominantly western environment.

According to Anzaldúa (2015) "as a writer, one of your tasks is to expose the dualistic nature of the debate between whites and people of color, the false, idealized pictures, and other *desconocimientos* each group has but would rather ignore and promote a more holistic perspective (p. 146). An all-inclusive perception of my new experiences within the doctoral program is embodied in a particular class, Philosophy of American Education escorted by its *living syllabus*.

I remember the first day of my philosophy class; I had my spirit fueled with faith and optimism, determined to continue shifting paradigms through new learning and the news stories that I had constructed in my community. I had already survived the five states of knowledge that guaranteed my spirit of endurance to face the issues of psychological borders at a certain level. But in reality, it was not as I had anticipated. When my professor familiarized us with the living syllabus, it caught my attention. Although I was acquainted with its format, this had a particular characteristic; it was subject to *change*. Through my lively interaction with its content, my *mestiza consciousness* began to create coping by developing a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity. The first "ambiguous reading" was a required and priority task that welcomed my tolerances, frustrations, and disclaimers. I had to be honest about my frustrations and challenges while facing this reading for the first time. I revealed my insights on my reading collision in a self-evaluation assignment at the end of this new learning experience.

Self -Evaluation

> Throughout my educational history, I was not taught much regarding South American history and little about the history, culture, and society of the United States of America. However, the Philosophy of American Education course has been my academic focus during this semester. Although, in the beginning, my first reading assignment, "Of the Training of Black Men" by DuBois, was challenging to understand, it was ambiguous for me because of my lack of background knowledge about these matters (segregation and racism). However, the dialogues in classes, analysis of videos, and research in other sources helped me better understand the social issues related to race, discrimination, white privilege, and social injustice.

Thus, I was constructing my new knowledge by learning and understanding about schools of thoughts and philosophies existing throughout American history, and that caused me frustrations and ambiguities in the beginning. Aside from being in uncharted territory, the disadvantage of not being a native English speaker tested my tolerance. This enthusiasm for evolving my *mestiza consciousness* in a space with multiple and diverse perspectives incited contradiction and critical receptions. As Anzaldúa (2015) manifests,

> A threat to your identifications and interpretations of reality enrages your shadow-beast, who views the new knowledge as an attack on your bodily integrity. And it is a death threat — to the belief that posits the self as local and limited to a physical body, a body perceived as a container separating the self from other people and other forms of knowledge. New Conocimiento (insights) threaten your sense of what's 'real' when it's up against what's 'real' to the other. But it's precisely this threat that triggers transformation. (p. 147)

The essence of the philosophy class articulated with continual self-reflection and social awareness on essential questions regarding *truth, power, choice, freedom, democracy, social justice, social efficacy, social mobility, social reproductions, social control, socioeconomic status, gender, language, ethnicity, race, abilities, ego*, etc. Reflecting on these subjects in a western context threatened my sense of what is real when it was up against what is real to the others. In the beginning, I found myself (intellectually) insecure in a class environment where I had to keep my critical and reflective thinking at its highest level to avoid spoiling the flow of *friendly dialogues*, not debate. The other souls seemed more interested in democratically sharing their points of view on the social problems that affected American education for causal reasons. In those moments, my mestiza consciousness entered an inner war. I personally believed I had made progress with the new stories (Guangras), gained a new awareness, found a new version of reality, created a workable account, fulfilled an obligation, and followed my own conscience. Unfortunately, my story failed the reality test (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.148).

The reality of the stories that I had lived and on which I increased my social awareness were minuscule to the realities of the other multiple souls. Mainly, I found myself with my *mestiza conscious* constantly in a clash of realities when I had to critically reflect on questions such as,

> *How do the essential questions above, the course readings, and the course activities interrelate to your teaching and learning experiences and to your own personal educational experiences? To your personally? In the context of education? In the context of school? As a teacher? As a student? For your current or future students?*

To achieve a new consciousness, the thinking of this mestiza "became a resource of intense pain; its energy came from continuous creative motion that keeps breaking down the

unitary aspect of each new paradigm (Anzaldúa,1987, p. 80). Negotiation takes work. Netanpleras must alter their mode of interaction- make it more inclusive open. In a to-and-from option, they shift from their customary position to the reality of first one group, then the other (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 148).

On other multiple stories shared during our philosophical thoughts, I self-reflect and self-evaluated about my stories lived as an academic transnational immigrant. My process of obtaining new knowledge was gradual; my task as a *mestiza consciousness* was to break down the subject-object dualism (Anzaldúa, 2015) that kept me, captive. The answer to the essential questions personifying the divisiveness between the white and the colored, *pelucones* (high social class*)* and *plebe (*underprivileged*),* lies in healing the split originating in the very foundation of our lives, culture, languages, and thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle (Anzaldúa, 2015), but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of perpetual social injustices like those of Guangras.

Internalizing my new knowledge forced me to negotiate another crisis identity, which stimulated me to balance my spiritual and emotional. From then on, I worked on positioning myself- exposed and raw- in the crack between these worlds. It was a bridge, a place of mutual access where thousands crisscross, network, share ideas, and struggle together to come to light our social awareness. I was motivated to allow my intellectual, emotional, and spiritual realities into this new academic setting. My *mestiza consciousness* is always alert, like "the neplantera attempting to see through the other's situation to her underlying unconscious desire (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 148).

Acting Out the Vision of Buen Vivir through Education

> The ability to recognize and endow meaning to daily experience (spirituality) furthers the ability to shift and transform. When and how does transformation happen? When a change occurs, your consciousness (awareness of your sense of self and your response to self, others, and surroundings becomes cognizant that it has a point of view and the ability to act from choice. (Anzaldúa, 2015, 150)

To act from choice is acting out the vision of spiritual activism. For Anzaldúa, spiritual activism is a completely embodied, highly political endeavor. While Anzaldúa did not coin the term "spiritual activism," she introduced it and the concept into feminist scholarship (Keating, 2016). *Shifting realities and acting out the vision of spiritual activism* is the last stage of conocimiento which begins from within and makes its way outward into the world manipulated by institutional forces perpetuated by hegemonic control. Thus, bringing to emerge one from the outside and inside; other and self/us, living in the space of interdependence. Besides, this is spirituality for social change; spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation (Keating, 2016).

This form of activism shatters categorical boundaries such as identity politics that create borders. If we can remove these psychological and physical boundaries, we can contribute to a more holistic democratic society through inclusive, reflective dialogue. In this stage,

> you look beyond the illusion of separate interests to a shared interest-you're in this together, no one is an isolated unit. You dedicate yourself, not to surface solutions that benefit only one group, but to a more informed service to humanity. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 572)

I learned to embrace the complexity of feeling multiple ways and empathizing with multiple views throughout my doctoral journey. By embracing and accepting myself, the release of investment, in my opinion, became possible, and transformation unfolded through balance and neutral perception. It is both an internal process described above and an interpersonal (transnational) process where one enacts the journey's lessons in social and structural spaces. The lessons of my transnational mobility trips embodied in my chrysalis (Go-teacher, Master, and Ph.D.) represent my choice to act with spiritual activism toward transforming (Ecuadorian) education for *Buen Vivir* in society.

From the Andes, a philosophical otherness arises, *Andean Philosophy*, as a manifestation of an ancient tradition that questions the civilizational centrism of the Western (Estermann, 2015). The purpose of Andean's thought is reflected in the *Sumak Kawsay*. The thought about *Sumak Kawsay* has evolved within epistemic communities responsible for determining the validity of their postulates. These epistemic communities are associated with changes in social patterns. According to Cuestas-Caza (2018) for most actors related to the "indigenous-culturalist" discourse, *Sumak*, translates as harmony, plenitude, and *Kawsay* as life, coexist. The most common translation is *Life in Plenitude* (Vida en Plenitud), although it is also possible to find as beautiful, harmonious, balanced or harmonic living together (Cuesta-Caza, 2018; Iñuca, 2017; Pacari, 2014).

However, some critics and authors have argued that *Buen Vivir* is not synonymous of *Sumak Kawsay* due to its incorrect translation. They claim that *Buen Vivir* in the Kichwa language could be found in Alli Kawsay and not in Sumak Kawsay. Alli Kawsay expresses the integrality and aspiration to improve the quality of life in interdependence with the beings of the environment, at the personal level (runa), at the family level (ayllu), at the community level

(llakta), and the intercommunity level within a territory. The social subjects involved come and go searching for the Alli Kawsay through day-to-day actions. The expression Alli Kawsay combines "inherited cultural notions" and "learned cultural notions" such as money, the market, and capital (Guandinango & Carrillo, 2013), although we could certainly refer to them as forced or imposed cultural notions (Cuestas-Caza, 2017, 2018).

Alli refers to the "good" to a social, material, and ethical life in the human sphere (Guandinango & Carrillo, 2013). In this way, Alli Kawsay seems to express in a better way the postmodern combination that seeks *Buen Vivir*. Alli Kawsay represents a frequent expression in the everyday linguistic, historical, spiritual, and experiential level of the Kichwa communities of the north of Ecuador. Thus, the ideal represented by the Sumak Kawsay emerges and develops within an Andean cultural reference, which resists cultural homogenization through language recovery (runashimi) and Andean practices.

In 2008, the concept of *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador's national legislation and planning emerged. Thus, the new Constitution of 2008 and the renamed *Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir* would become the main instruments for the institutionalization of *Buen Vivir* in public policies and the life of Ecuadorian society (Cuesta-Caza, 2018). Thus, *Buen Vivir* emerges from the positions that claim the review and reinterpretation of the relationship between nature and human beings. That is from the transit of current anthropocentrism to biopluralism insofar as a human activity uses natural resources adapted to their natural generation (regeneration) (Acosta, 2009). *Buen Vivir* also claims equality and social justice and the recognition, appreciation, and dialogue of peoples and their cultures, knowledge, and ways of life. Knowing that *Buen Vivir* implies being aware of a complex, living, non-linear concept, historically constructed and therefore constantly re-signified, then it can be understood as*;*

> The satisfaction of needs, achievement of dignified life quality and death, loving and being loved, and the healthy flourishing of all, in peace and harmony with nature and the indefinite prolongation of human cultures. Good Living supposes having free time for contemplation and emancipation and individuals' freedoms, opportunities, capacities, and real potentialities. These are expanded and flourish to simultaneously achieve what society, the territories, the diverse collective identities. And each one is seen as a universal and particular human being. At the same time, values are a desirable goal of life, materially and subjectively, without producing any domination of another. This concept of Good Living forces us to rebuild the public to recognize, understand, and value each other among diverse but equal. So that the possibility of reciprocity and mutual recognition prospers, thereby enabling self-realization and construction of a shared social future. (Ramírez, 2008, p. 387)

For the last decade, I have learned to orient myself to the environment of experiencing this dual world and living in-betweenness. My relationships with transnational spaces enabled me to read and garner insight from whatever situation I am in. From unawareness to awareness, I swing my intense feelings to those of the other without being hijacked by either (Anzaldúa, 2015). I have learned that one honors people's otherness in one's activism, deconstructing barriers from that otherness and opening possibilities for creating allies and further connection.

My academic transitions best encapsulate the fundamental perspectives and beliefs to which it demonstrates the growth of my consciousness and, in turn, points others toward their multiple individual/collective visions. Under an ethical, compassionate strategy, I have learned to negotiate conflict and differences between myself and others and find common ground by forming holistic alliances. For now, as a final move, through and away from the pain, healing the

wounds, embracing my new mestiza conciseness, and acting with spiritual activism, I question myself:

What does education embody from the paradigm of *Buen Vivir*?

It is an education for coexistence, recognition, and inter-relationship with life in all its expressions. Education to flow, value, build, appreciate, understand life in harmony between feeling, doing, and thinking coherently. But in the same way, it means antagonisms, contradictions, and struggles against everything that destroys and threatens the majority's life and nature. The *Buen Vivir* policy translates into four definitions from the Aymara peoples: *similarity*, we all go together; *complementarity*, that no one is left behind; *inclusion* that no one lacks anything; and *correspondence* that everything belongs to everyone (Álvarez, 2017; Cacillería Boliviana, 2015).

The similarity in education means other peoples and cultures are recognized as other worlds within the same planet, and the demand to acknowledge new humanities. Due to the differential nature of societies, cultures, and individuals, there is need to build and propose the common. Teaching what is common is not destroying differences; on the contrary, it recognizes them (Álvarez, 2017). As the world is a place where we must coexist among different people, what is common is encountering differences.

Besides, similarity requires us to build a vision from the South (America), from the dominated, massacred, and violated peoples, and from there, concerning other peoples and worlds. In this way, we seek education with other peoples, communities, groups, and individuals without falling into the totalitarian illusions of development, enlightened education, and science as the only and absolute way. However, we must accept that we need many achievements of

action, knowledge as one of the necessary lines in education, and science as an essential way of expertise and teaching-learning of our peoples.

Education for *Buen Vivir* is also complimentary where the educational activity is in a circular way where the teacher is someone else who intervenes, together with the community, the students, the practices, the virtual campus, and the learning groups preparing this pedagogically so that all this is complemented. Such educational complementarity is the product of the teacher, who anticipates, allows, and conducts the meetings and accompanies them at the splits. As well, only schools' infrastructures, do not guarantee success without knowledgeable teachers, motivated students, and poor technological tools. Educational complementarity forces us not to be reductionist in education, build comprehensive pedagogical judgments, and act in a complex way in times of uncertainty and globality (Álvarez, 2017). Recognizing that teaching requires learning and learning requires instruction. We always need someone to teach us by whatever means this may be.

The paradox of education is that it was considered essential to access education for humanity since modernization (Kant, 2015). However, it has historically been a means of multiple exclusions leaving behind women, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, poor, entire groups due to physical, psychological, natural, and even moral impossibilities. Therefore, when we affirm that education must be inclusive, we need to review the implemented mechanisms and devices so that education is one of the main mechanisms of exclusion.

Today we find ourselves in education perceived as commonplace; no one reaches a full potential if it is not because oneself makes an effort and prepares. Considering that education is the best way for social mobility, it must overcome all obstacles of discrimination and exclusion, promoting a society of equal opportunities. Learning is essential for the inclusive educational act,

but we strengthen cognitive and educational inequality without a common core. We require standards that are defined in teaching. In short, “teaching without learning generates exclusions, and learning without teaching can cause inequalities (Álvarez, 2017, p. 12).

Then education with ethical foundation. Ethics gives authenticity to education. When the purpose of education falls on capital, it becomes a parody; it is almost as if education faded. The commonplace of education as a commodity remains hegemonic. The capitalism defines the ultimate goals of education; therefore, an education that is not pragmatic and instrumental prepares entrepreneurs makes no sense to capitalism. If education depends on the law of supply and demand, apprenticeships do not have room (Tedesco, 2001). Learning is doing what we don't know, doing so. Learning processes are the focus of teaching. The teaching-learning of *Buen Vivir* defines a series of values that are not compatible with the market: cooperation, instead of competition, is one of the values in opposition. (Álvarez, 2017) The educational act that prepares for the competition is a great contradiction for the *Buen Vivir*.

Thus, the principle of similarity recognizes the humanity outside of Eurocentrism; the beginning of complementarity is a break with western thoughts (Barreto et al., 2018) the principle of inclusion is not only to include the excluded but fundamentally to ask ourselves how we build more democratic societies; and the correspondence principle is to give the first step and not expect others to do it for me. Responsibility prepares viable responses, non-linear, without paternalism, and dependencies (Álvarez, 2017).

The meaning of taught and learned in education is denied by excluding the poor and certain historical groups. As educators, we must act with an active spirit to the commitment of teaching in *Buen Vivir*. Therefore, our people (pueblo) are recognized with the same right to life that the powerful (elite) have captured only for themselves because we are similar. An active

spirit to demand all rights so that there is a *life for plenitude* since complementarity is only possible if we recognize the rights of nature and the poorest. We must also enact that education prepares for radical democracy by including those deemed uneducable. I advocate for education for Good Living to prepare us for co-responsibility with the planet, for the fight against climate change, misery, and poverty, and an alternative to development.

Summary

> Education is the point where it is decided if we love the world enough to take responsibility for it, otherwise it will lead us to inevitable ruin without renewing it with the arrival of human beings who come for the first time. (Arendt, 1991, p. 252)

By reconstructing my educational history due to transnational mobilities, I have learned to free myself from the learning that tied me to the past as vocation. At the same time, my new knowledge has helped me release myself from the initial self-centeredness, the lack of social awareness, the ghost of not being able to. But, as well, the prejudices, devaluation, acceptance, resignation, and the fear to change have kept me captive, causing my *desconocimientos* (unawareness).

Upon renewing my *mestiza consciousness*, I recognized that teachers with solid professional training are required to educate people and professionals with commitment and heart. Our responsibility is not to comply with what the educational institution demands; it is about responsibility with those who are to come or are coming or are already present here.

Educating has a deep and diverse relationship with the world, dynamics, and flows its populations' cultures. In this sense, the transfer of knowledge, ideas, learning, and training occur everywhere, at all times, and through various means and institutions. The big difference is

that the school institution is responsible for preparing the world, anticipating, imagining, and building it.

Each transitional experience through the path of conocimiento would have been impossible if I had positioned myself as an educator without hopeful relationships with the future. My hope lies in education aligned to the *Buen Vivir* paradigm that, with its intercultural character, promotes the sense of interdependence between the knowledge of the past and the sciences and contemporary disciplines. It is placing their relations based on the significant challenges of the future and redefining global goals so as not to repeat the past defects. It is essential to consider the indispensable wisdom of the past; so that the future is not disconnected from it.

Education for *Buen Vivir* requires making *arrebatos* and continuities while innovating as if it were the moment of the unprecedented and unheard of. Thus, when preparing teachers today, we (educational actors) are obliged to respond to the significant planetary challenges, transform the ways of thinking, feeling, and doing, to be linguists global. As well as to acquire rigorous knowledge from a contextual and intercultural world much more global, deep, uncertain, changing, and complex (Villagómez, 2014). It only can be achieved if (traditional) educators think of getting out of the parochialism that makes us dangerously blind, contextualizing in relationship with the world, and opening ourselves to cultures accepting the challenge of interculturality.

Nothing of this will be possible without building bridges with what has been decreed as unthinkable, impossible (Anzaldúa, 2015). Ultimately, by looking to the past, we respond to the uncertainty of the future, which means avoiding repetition and anachronisms. But mainly reverse the own conservatisms of the fear of the new and change. In other words, the

contradiction between the new and the old originates in *Buen Vivir* and assuming it means guaranteeing *Buen Vivir.*

The journey through my *three chrysalides* deepened my awareness, providing a lens to see existence with fewer restrictions and the freedom to choose what and how I perceive life. I have been talking to my *inner-mestiza conspicuousness* first to learn about the old me, then to understand and make meaning of the disruptive, potentially transformative transnational experiences. My internal shifts entail the construction of my *new mestiza consciousness*, which leads me to external transformation, which resumes having *activism spirit* to acting out the vision of *Buen Vivir* by advocating for the reconstruction of (Ecuadorian) education. After all, the driving force behind this passion and desire for knowledge is to understand and love yourself, so you can, in turn, give that back to the universe (Anzaldúa, 2002). To conclude:

> The *new mestiza* learns to be a Cañari in (Ecuadorian) culture, to be from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality. She operates in pluralistic mode- nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. She can be jarred out of ambiance by an intense, and often painful, emotional event that inverse or resolves the ambivalence into something else. I'm not sure exactly how. The work takes place underground -subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 10).

Chapter 5 - Revealing Transnational Through Self-Narrative Portrait

Introduction

Changes in attitude are necessary before alternatives to the traditional doctoral dissertation are recognized within the academy (Sander, 1998). Unwillingness to change seems rooted in tradition, causing excellence of higher education to be often judged by the rigors of that

tradition and by those who have the resilience to complete the doctoral program (Noble, 1994). One of the most crucial elements within the doctoral experience is achieving the doctoral dissertation and all it implies. The struggle to change the status quo within doctoral programs is not new. The traditional role of the doctoral dissertation has been a controversial issue in higher education for many years.

It is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel for the research process to be meaningful for the doctoral student; what is needed is to reshape what already exists (Sander, 1998). The solution does not lie in existing strategies and traditional programs but within the framework of an emerging paradigm embraced by those paradigm pioneers who are unwilling to settle in and never take risks (Sanders, 1998). Incorporating a *risk-taking philosophy* into doctoral programs can further the research process and promote the timely completion of the culminating project or experience. Now and in the future, much of "the success or failure of doctoral education depends on the role and nature of dissertations" (Hamilton, 1993, p. 55).

As I entered my doctoral program, I was not aware there were other alternatives to construct a dissertation distinctive from the *traditional* ones. Thinking along usual dissertation lines, I understood its formal process encompassed five chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions. However, in my qualitative research course, I was introduced to other *risk-taking philosophies* to conduct a research study within the qualitative field aligned to education. This new knowledge stirred my interest in examining in-depth unconventional approaches to qualitative research. Particularly my interest was with alternative methods aligned to the autoethnographic methodology that I would contemplate for constructing and completing my doctoral dissertation. Golde et al. (2006) declare:

> The purpose of doctoral education, taken broadly, is to educate and prepare those who can be entrusted with the vigor, quality, and integrity of the field. This person is a scholar first and foremost, in the fullest sense of the term— someone who will creatively generate new knowledge, critically conserve valuable and useful ideas, and responsibly transform those understandings through writing, teaching, and application. (p. 2)

Under this perspective and reflecting on my doctoral dissertation purpose, I embraced a *risk-taking philosophy* to critically and artistically produce knowledge by conducting a *nontraditional* doctoral dissertation. Understanding perspectives from scholars who explicitly challenge the traditions of the dissertation (Jacobs, 2009), I aimed to decolonize traditional academic structures and systems that have marginalized and misrepresented transnational (Latino/as) academics' ways of thinking and knowing.

Thus, acknowledging that there are different ways to approach data management, analysis, and representation in qualitative inquiry, this chapter embodies data analysis, interpretation, and presentation procedures relevant for answering my research questions and this autoethnography study purpose.

Since narrative as a more encompassing term explores how people make sense of life through the act of narrating, I tailored my data collection and management aligned to Chang's (2016) *strategies for self-narratives data collection*. The analysis method aided by a combination of (self) *narrative portraits analytical strategy* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020), *writing as a method of inquiry* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and *theory-driven analytical features* (Bhattacharya, 2014*)* that assisted me identifying aspect specific to my research subject.

Autoethnography has opened spaces for incorporating *creative arts-based* approaches (Anzaldúa, 2015; Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016; Leavy, 2009; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005),

and this project embraces those creative possibilities. Creative approaches include new ways of thinking about voice, data, space, writing style, and the integration of creative genres of data representation and the documentation of the knowledge construction process. Apart from adding aesthetic merit, these innovative approaches open new ways for readers to see and interact with complex sociocultural lived experiences. They also intend to enhance the impact on the reader to help move people to action (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Thus, the representation of my data analysis draws in the *arts-based approaches* to educational research (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2012), which integrate tenets from the creative arts into scholarly work. These approaches are valuable and effective in "expressing the multiplicity of lived experiences in nuanced, complex ways while also remaining accessible and evoking emotional connections" (Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 21). Besides, tenets of the *portraiture methodology* (Travis, 2020) and *narrative portraiture* (Rodriguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020) intersect with art-based methods embody my self-narrative findings. By creatively designing a self-portrait painting with *two-dimensional visual art* (Wang et al., 2017), I capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of my ten years of transnational academic experiences.

Moreover, this artwork, which I recognize as my *transnational academic metamorphic self-portrait painting*, merges my identity, my transnational decolonizing voice, and spirit essence existing among multiple spaces and realities. Mainly, the significance of this self-portrait is that it responds to the research questions by enacting, materializing, and concretizing the concept of the transnational progressive learner about the intersectional ethnographic spaces where I interact. Likewise, it informs interpretations of postcolonial educational practices and the achievement of academic excellence for a culture of living under the notions of *Buen Vivir.* That in *Alli Kawsay* (Kichua terms) conveys the integrality and aspiration to improve the quality of

life in interdependence with the beings of the environment, at the personal (runa), family (ayllu), community (llakta), and the intercommunity level within a territory. It involves individuals that come and go searching for the *Alli Kawsay* through day-to-day actions.

I regularly use short personal stories and poetry (Leavy, 2009) to represent and explore my perspectives in this research. These poetic moments intend to open a vibrant path to the fragmented aspects of my identity and voice through episodical experiences. Furthermore, I have interwoven these poems and personal accounts throughout this work into the scholarly narrative and analysis structure present in other autoethnographic reports (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013). Thus, my self-narrative findings involve a *poetic representation* (Butler-Kisber, 2017) since poetic positions allow for a more personal conversation tone. A further glimpse into my lived experiences is a way to show the audience the careful, in-depth analysis of my thoughts, not just tell them about what occurs on the surface. It is significant for creative autoethnographic projects because authors need to provide enough self-exposure (vulnerability) to adequately inform the reader and expose the nuances of the sociocultural-academic intersections that I interrogated in this study. These efforts do not pretend to be as novelty or gimmick; they are legitimate stories and expressive reflections connected to the scholarly centers I write.

Consequently, in the following section, I describe my process of conducting self-narrative data collection, management, and analysis aligned to theoretical perspectives while using the NVivo software. In this sense, the creative style in this nontraditional dissertation project intends to add aesthetic merit and to break rank with traditional academic practices. By making space for transnational-decolonial ways of knowledge-making through thorough and careful analysis of my lived experiences against larger academic discourses that marginalize *transnational/international scholars* within educational arenas.

Evaluating my Decada Ganada by Merging Data, Writing, Process, and Product

Self-narratives refer to a wide range of written accounts of self, representing diverse genres, authorship, themes, and writing styles. They record personal stories of self-narrators and embrace the sociocultural contexts of the stories. Therefore, writing one's self-narratives and studying other self-narratives are valuable in learning about self and others, particularly in a cultural sense. The writing process evokes self-reflection and self-analysis through which self-discovery becomes possible (Chang, 2016, p. 41). Despite the differences in formality, scope, and format, all genres of self-narrative share the ordinary activities of memory search, self-revelation through personal stories, and self-reflection in the process.

Autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation. It is this analytical and interpretive autoethnography from the complex landscape of self-narratives to discuss its distinctive characteristics and application in the social sciences (Chang, 2016, p. 43). According to Chang (2016), self-narratives vary depending on the themes they adopt; these themes can be as diverse as the widespread authorship. For instance, self-reflection for educational practitioners is strongly advocated in teacher education. More educators are engaging in self-reflective narration in the form of a cultural autobiography (Chang, 1999; Kennett, 1999) and teacher autobiography (Brookfield, 1995; Clausen & Cruickshank, 1991; Nieto, 2003; Powell, Zehm, & Garcia, 1996; Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005). Others have engaged in teacher research in which they self-observe their teaching practices, examine their relationship with students, and reflect on their teaching philosophy.

Under these perspectives, the thematic focus of my self-narratives positions under the field of (transnational) education (Adams, 2018) and professorship (Nash, 2002). However,

Chang (2016) manifests that data analysis begins after setting a thematic focus while data collection is still in progress. As a result, analysis facilitates the collection of more relevant and meaningful data. Thus, ethnographic writing often concurs with data analysis and interpretation, and this dynamic process sometimes spurs more data collection. Furthermore, this multi-layered ethnographic process allows a more shaped focused research, data collection relevance, and in-depth interpretation to be applied along the way (Chang, pp. 61-62). Since one's orientation to the world and research informs the researcher's data management and analysis process (Bhattacharya, 2015), I aim to demonstrate how my theoretical perspective, epistemology, and ontology drove my data collection, management, analysis process, and findings representation. Through NVivo, a software created by QSR International and qualitative researchers for data organization and analysis, I describe my analytical and interpretative self-narrative process.

Self-narrative Data Management and Analysis Aligned to Critical and Transnational perspectives

The boundaries between what clearly distinguishes one theoretical perspective from another often blur, and it falls on researchers to situate and defend their work (Bhattacharya, 2017). On this concept, I conduct my self-narrative data management and analysis by situating myself from a *decolonizing transnational academic perspective* that falls simultaneously in the *critical* and *deconstructive* realms. It falls in the critical sphere because I self-reflect on how sociocultural spaces and educational systems reflect local and global structures of inequity. It is also deconstructive because it challenges dominant discourses, destabilizes binary relationships, and problematizes power relations that favor one group of people (Bhattacharya, 2015). I am also drawn to *art-based approaches* to educational research (Barone & Eisner, 2006) and *portraiture methodology* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). It shares some similarities to art-based

research and its combination of the arts with social science research, particularly within educational research (Travis, 2020).

Therefore, the data management and analysis process were completely non-linear and multidirectional. It was satisfactory to have software like NVivo to assist with my memory, self-observational, and self-reflective and external raw data I collected throughout my ten years (década ganada) of experiencing transnational academic mobilities. On the data collection, I had various data sources that I chronologically collected since I started with my first academic mobility, which began in 2013 with the Go-teacher program, to the realization of this non-traditional autoethnographic dissertation project. The majority of data were organized in my computer files and external drive, which were leveled under broader categorical names such as Master program courses materials, courses reflection papers, Go-teacher program documents, Ph.D. Courses, GTA/ Teaching as a Career, fotos KSU (pictures), videos, recordings, UNAE 2016-2018, Proyecto de Guangras (Guangras project), In-EFL professional development program, fotos familia (family pictures), Programa de Becas (scholarship programs), and more.

Under each categorical data file, there were various subcategory files relating to each other. Considering the amount of data source (personal memory and external) in each file, I needed to select the most significant data to attend to my research questions and study purpose. Then I started by choosing the most valuable data from my files and organizing and importing it to new folders in NVivo. Contemplating the methodological planning for my data analyses, interpretation, and reporting, I managed my data supported by Chang's (2016) *data collection strategies*. With that understanding, I mixed and matched the approach of data collection, analysis, and interpretation to find the ones that best serve my research goal (Chang, 2016).

Thus, when I opened up NVivo first, I created a *core document*, indicating that the document would maintain the focus on the research purpose and questions while managing and analyzing the data. In the *core document*, I recorded the research questions, the theoretical perspectives of transnationalism, transnational academic mobility, seven stages of the path of Conocimiento, *Buen Vivir* stances, and critical perspectives. That way, while I managed the data, wrote about the data, and explored connections, I was reminded to work in theory in the analytic process.

Writing a self-narrative can be overwhelming when people try to tackle a complex and multi-faceted life as an entirety from the beginning (Chang, 2016). I managed my multiple data sources by breaking them down into practicable steps. Then I used the *chronicling of the past* (Chang, 2016) strategy, which gave me a sequential order to bits of information I collected from memory, self-observation, and self-reflection. Therefore, I created an *autobiographical timeline* (Chang, 2016) with memorable events and experiences lived along my transnational mobilities and the sequence of my personal and social-cultural, and academic activities routines. This strategy illuminated the evolution of my personal life and sequential regularity in my lived experiences. Therefore, centering on my research focus, I created a *thematically focused timeline* (Chang, 2016), grounded on my academic development process, transnational academic activities and practices, transnational educational experiences, and accomplishments. This timeline gave me a foundation for my *self-narrative portraiture* data analysis. Furthermore, by chronicling border-crossing journeys, I saw how my multicultural awareness evolved in the lifetime of my academic transnationality.

Therefore, in NVivo, I created *autobiographical timeline files* to organize and import data sources from my data files on my computer and external drive. In addition, I linked a memo to

every file, which was fundamental for writing my self-reflection, thoughts, interrogations, and interpretations while selecting and importing the data. Besides what was extracted through my memory, I wrote down on the memos I used when conducting the *narrative portraiture analysis* and interpretation. Since what is recalled from the past forms the basis of autoethnographic data (Chang, 2016), I openly acknowledged my memory as my study's primary source of information. Consequently, these writing procedures were a catalyst for documenting my further thoughts, perceptions, feelings, emotions, and self-reflections that served my analytical process. Therefore, my *autobiographical timeline files*, in which I included short descriptions and key points, embraced:

1) 2013- First academic mobility to Kansas State University (FAM-KSU) (granted with a scholarship, Go-teacher professional development program, becoming an emigrant and immigrant, ruptures, leaving the familiar home, leaving in between, experiencing opposite socio-cultural and academic realities, focused more on learning new teaching approaches, experiencing a new culture, language, and being part of the minority in western spaces)
2) 2014- Returned to Ecuador as a Go teacher *becaria retornada* (a full-time EFL teacher as in a public high school, increasing awareness of social inequalities in public education, motivated for applying transnational activities and practices, knowledge transfer, discovering new realities in Ecuadorian educational context)
3) 2015- Second academic mobility for Master Program at KSU (SAM-MP-KSU) (new knowledge on teaching and learning emancipatory practices, e-portfolio accomplishment, renewed spirit for education, more involved in western socio-

cultural spaces and educational system, first internship experiences with *Unified School District 465* -elementary school)

4) 2016- Returned to Ecuador as a Master in Science in Curriculum & Instruction (full time professor-researcher at *Universidad Nacional de Educación* (UNAE), knowledge transfer and knowledge production activities such as conducted two research projects related to Guangras community, evaluation of English National Curriculum, elaboration of professional development program In-EFL, articles publications, national research award)
5) 2018- Third academic mobility for Doctoral program at KSU (TAM-DP-KSU) (becoming self-aware of western social and educational realities through interaction within classes, constant self-reflection, self-evaluation, and critical thinking through EDCI 813, 907, 812, 943, EDLEA 838 courses; increasing social consciousness, critical and analytical thinking as a GTA; aiming to reach spiritual activism, new mestiza consciousness; Andean thoughts through *Buen Vivir* paradigms, Heroines' publication, GTA's monthly meetings, member of Faculty Affairs Committee)

Thus, I created five files with their corresponding timelines, including leading event descriptions documented in individual memos. Creating these *timeline files* gave me a foundation for further analysis of my self-narrative portrait. Information on personal, familial, and societal routines helps discover sociocultural patterns intertwined with my life, community, and society. Chang (2016) suggests that *inventorying self* is a practical activity for data collection and management. She offers five thematic categories as a starter: *proverbs, virtues and values, rituals, mentors, and artifacts.* However, I included other thematic types that were significant for my analysis and the ones that I had generated during my data collection. After creating my

autobiographical timeline files, I referred to my core document to remind me of my research focus. Then I started a list of *thematic categories files*, which I allocated under the corresponding *timeline file* in NVivo.

Therefore, the inventory self of my thematic categories included *quotes, virtues, values, rituals or ceremonies, mentors, and artifacts*. Then I created a subfile under each *timeline file* with its *thematic categories*. It is essential to clarify that I did not include every thematic category under each timeline file. It depended on the time and circumstances that I recorded on my memory or written down information on textual artifacts when collecting data. I selected to import at least five items for each thematic category and prioritized them by their importance. For example, when creating the subfile about the category *quotes,* I imported data to timeline file #5, 2018- 2022 TAM-DP-KSU. Quotations, citations, and excerpts significantly influenced my doctoral program in this timeline. Another thematic category example is *rituals* and *celebrations* as routines, and since they are also repetitive, although they do not always adhere to rigid schedules and time cycles. Then I imported data on rituals and celebrations associated with personal events such as birthday parties, New Year's family reunions, and social events, including College of Education celebrations, graduation ceremonies, religious rituals, sports events, international students' events, etc. Some were more symbolic, official, ceremonial, or conventional than others. Through my *década ganada,* I had gained community knowledge and increased societal awareness by participating in rituals and ceremonies in various sociocultural and academic spaces.

Foltz and Griffin (1996) wrote about their transformation process during their study of rituals "the power of ritual had much to do with these changes in [their] inner landscape" (p. 324). While importing data about personal, familial, sociocultural, and academic rituals, I also

had a memo liked to this file. In this memo, I described each ceremony in detail regarding who, when, where, what, and how. It allowed me to reflect on why it was necessary for my academic experiences. Each category represented the cognitive, affective, social, and material aspects of my transnational identity that I matured in the interaction with others.

Another file I created was the thematic category *mentors*. Mentors are "wise and trusted guide[s] and advisor [advisor[s]" or "teacher[s] or trusted counselor[s]" according to Wordnet Search 3.0 (Princeton University, 2006, in Chang, 2016, p. 79). A mentor can include anyone - whether older or younger than me - from whom I have learned new knowledge, skills, principles, wisdom, or perspectives that have impacted my life. Cultural acquisition and transmission often occur between mentors and mentees because they intentionally or unintentionally invite mentees to share their knowledge, skills, and perspective from their cultural groups. With or without intention, mentors make durable impressions on mentees through their enduring relationships (Chang, 2016, p. 80).

Under this perspective, I created a mentor's file under each timeline file. There was always a unique soul mentor (my parents, son, siblings, Cora, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Martinez, Dr. Sherbert, Dr. Goodson, GTA colleagues, Ecuadorian colleagues, and friends) supporting my *arrebatos* and celebrating my joys. They played pivotal roles at critical points in my transnational academic life. With their guidance, encouragement, inspiration, and support, they expressed no sense of limits on my potential or who they thought I could become. Instead, they crossed to my side to look at me within, not just external, and affirmed my strengths because I was blessed to be born with a *gran shungo Azogueño* (big Azogueña's heart). These mentors signified that spark of light that illuminated my paths of ruptures and uncertainty.

I also created a category file of *artifacts* where I imported texts related to cultural artifacts which explicitly or implicitly manifested societal norms and values. Artifacts are ubiquitous in all levels and periods of culture (Chang, 2016). For instance, football balls, wildcat school materials, computers, books, cellphone, iPods, etc., those artifacts were visible everywhere. They had utility or ceremonial value incorporated into my life in the societies where I interacted.

Visualizing self means that one picture is worth a thousand words. A visual image can convey a message more efficiently and powerfully than a series of text. As a powerful communication tool, visualization enhances the simplicity and brevity of a visual image into which complex texts are condensed and captured (Chang, 2016). I created a *picture* file under each timeline and imported the most significant images that I had been chronologically collecting along my academic journeys. These imported photos became understandable and manageable for data analysis. Once bits of data had shaped in a simplified visual image, I unpacked its meaning in writing (Chang, 2016). Finally, I linked a memo to each photo to contextualize the necessary background information. This visualization activity mixed my personal memory data through self-reflection and self-introspection with my self-narrative analysis and interpretation.

Through this process, I created the *timeline files* and *thematic categories subfiles* in NVivo, which included adding personal memory data by the chronicling strategy of recalling personal and social events and experiences and giving a chronological structure to them. Furthermore, inventorying was used to list and import autobiographical information and rank it by importance, and visualize personal memories into visual images. I added to these memory data other external data significant for the analytical process.

Since autoethnography is self-centric in some ways (Chang, 2016), the primary data source was related to my past and present. Personal memory data engendered the physical evidence of memory, and self-observational and self-reflective data from the present captured the trace of my current perspectives. Thus, the *timeline files* and *thematic categorical files* with their *subfiles* were deeply anchored on my lived experiences and views on the physical, sociocultural, academic, and historical context of my experiences. Additionally, to my memory, self-observational and self-reflective data, external sources provided supplementary perspectives and contextual information for my *self-narrative portraiture analysis*. Therefore, constantly reflecting on my core document, I selected textual artifacts data to import and organized them under the corresponding timelines file.

Muncey (2005) argues that *text-based artifacts* are a valuable data collection technique because they add "additional evidence acquired throughout life…to fill some of the gaps left by the snapshots" (p. 2). Consequently, living in text-oriented academic spaces, I collected ample textual artifacts that enhanced my understanding of self and the context of my lived experiences. My textual artifacts included officially produced documents and personal, formal and informal, text written by me about me and my academic contexts. After selecting the most significant textual artifacts such as diplomas, official letters, certificates, employment contracts, deeds, and announcements (Phifer, 2011), I imported them into each corresponding *timeline file*. For instance, Go-teacher scholarship official letters were allocated to the 2013-FAM-KSU timeline file. Employment contracts records were imported to 2, 4, and 5 timeline files, and so on.

Other textual artifacts were imported and managed in each corresponding *timeline file*, such as newspaper articles, bulletins, academic programs documents, self-reflections academic writings, work reports, mentors' comments, personal published articles, and write-ups about me

in my surroundings. Besides, personally produced texts were valuable because they preserved my thoughts, feelings, emotions, reflections, and perspectives at the time of documenting, untainted by my present research agenda. I also included personal letters, emails, essays, travel journals data from my past.

The moments of my transnational movements provided a context for entering into other levels of being and belonging to the world that activated latent or potential dimensions of my self (Neumann, 1992). Therefore, self-introspection recorded in my travel diaries benefited my self-narratives' analysis and interpretation. Moreover, non-textual artifacts like videotapes, memorabilia, souvenirs were not ignored as valuable autoethnographic data. Visual data like photo cellphones complemented textual data and sometimes superseded the benefit of textual data because visual data make long-term impressions on viewers (Chang, 2016).

Finally, literature served as an essential source of data that enabled me to contextualize my personal story within public history (Chang, 2016, p. 111). Literature review gives autoethnography an identity as the social science research, intersecting the subjectivity of the inner world with the objectivity of the outer world (Chang, 2016, p. 111). Thus, my literature review was only one of many data collections sources I managed in NVivo. Therefore, I kept my review in a proper proportion aligned to the research questions and the purpose of the study. A well-crafted literature review helped to have an efficient execution for the analytical process. Thus, data management was thoroughly induced by external sources as textual and no textual artifacts and a literature review. In short, external data provided contextual information that validated or corrected personal data from the past and self-observational and self-reflective data from the present. This data management process helped me triangulate, fill in gaps left by self-based data, and connect my private story with the outer world. (Chang, 2016).

Analytical Interpretation Through Narrative Portrait Approach

Portraiture is a form of qualitative inquiry developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) that draws upon ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, and arts-based methods. It is a hybrid qualitative methodology (Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), contains elements of ethnography in its use of observational field notes and interviews (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Van Maanen, 2011), narrative inquiry in its focus on participants' stories (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2011; Riessman, 2008), phenomenological research in its emphasis on the documentation of embodied experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2016), and arts-based research in its attention to aesthetics both in the collection and presentation of research data (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Bresler, 2006; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011). Thus, portraiture is framed as a methodological confluence of art and the social sciences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Besides, portraiture relies on how description is both interpretive (a common tenet of artistic forms) and analytic (a characteristic associated with the sciences) (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2011). Portraiture attempts to combine "interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 185) as well as critical perspectives through research (Travis, 2020).

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) emphasize the benefits of working with such paradigmatic dualities within the methodology and efforts to merge the ostensibly binary perspectives of science and aesthetics:

> In developing the aesthetic whole, we come face to face with the tensions inherent in blending art and science, analysis and narrative, description and interpretation, structure and texture. We are reminded of the dual motivations guiding portraiture: to inform and

> inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and to the heart. How do we create a document that is both authentic and evocative, coded and colorful? (p. 243)

Theorists of narrative inquiry have explored how narratives guide our experiences, feelings, decisions, and identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Riessman, 2008; Rolling, 2016). In this context, along with my *risk-taking philosophy*, in this section, I explain my analytical interpretative process, which draws upon tenets of *portraiture methodology* and intersect with *arts-based research* and *critical approaches* (Travis, 2020). Rodriguez-Dorans and Jacobs (2020) argue that people's narratives have ontological relevance in themselves. There is value in attempting to write about and reflect 'the ordinary lives of people' (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 52) in staying closely with the research experience. *Narrative portraiture* can add to "the existing field of narrative research because, by staying close to the raw data, we bring the participants back to the centre of the study" (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020, p. 612).

Narrative portraiture helps answer research questions that: (a) are concerned with context and relationality, and (b) aim to capture processes in detail. These qualities allow researchers to engage with crucial aspects of research, such as ambiguity and change, within personal narratives (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020). However, developing a coherent self-narrative from vast qualitative data requires skill and can be approached methodically. It is why I embraced an analytical strategy for narrative analysis proposed by Rodríguez-Dorans and Jacobs (2020) for my self-narrative. This analytic strategy fulfills two tasks: first, it offers a detailed description of the story, illustrating process and context (the 'how'); and, secondly, it indicates underlying reasons and influences (the 'why') (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020, p. 614). Therefore, I aimed to inform, illustrate, interpret, and respond to my research questions authentically and reflectively by adopting this analysis approach.

This strategy consists of analytical steps involving coding for (1) Characters; (2) Time; (3) Space and Circumstances; (4) Key Events; and (5) Intersection of phenomena of interest. An in-depth account of what happened when, where, and with whom might seem very descriptive. However, before interpreting and explaining the data, it is helpful to write a holistic description outlining the story or stories in the first instance. The descriptive insight can then inform a deeper exploration of the data to explore questions of 'why' (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020; Yin, 2014). Under these analytical steps, I analyzed my self-narrative data in two ways: first in the form of idiographic (self-focus) narratives and secondly as an overarching analysis with central themes identified across my memory, self-observational, self-reflective, and external data managed in the NVivo files. Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs (2020) provide a table as a guide to start this analytical process.

Table 1. Analytic tools to aid the process of making narrative portraits

Codes	**Research Question* helps to illustrate**	**Key words: What to look for**
Characters	WHO-Important characters; Relationship between characters	Names, pronouns, the first person ("I"), experiences or events involving other people
Time	WHEN- Historic context; Sequence of story; Experience of time	Dates, Years, Conjunctions of time (after, before, when), Time periods (weeks, months, days)
Space	WHERE- Geography; political, cultural, social, economic, (academic) context	Macro-geography (cities, countries, continents), Micro-space (across the road, in the kitchen, the hospital), virtual spaces (online, state of mind, and emotional space)
Key events	HOW/WHY- Connection and Relations; interactions; turning points, Wider influences	Strong emotions surrounding event, Link to important decision that is made, Change in narrative after event
Phenomena of interest	HOW/WHY- How is phenomena of interest narrated, conceptualized, experienced; Where	Pre-identified themes of interest e.g., ecological perspective, identity, disability

Codes	Research Question* helps to illustrate	Key words: What to look for
	is phenomena of interest located; Intersection of concepts and context	

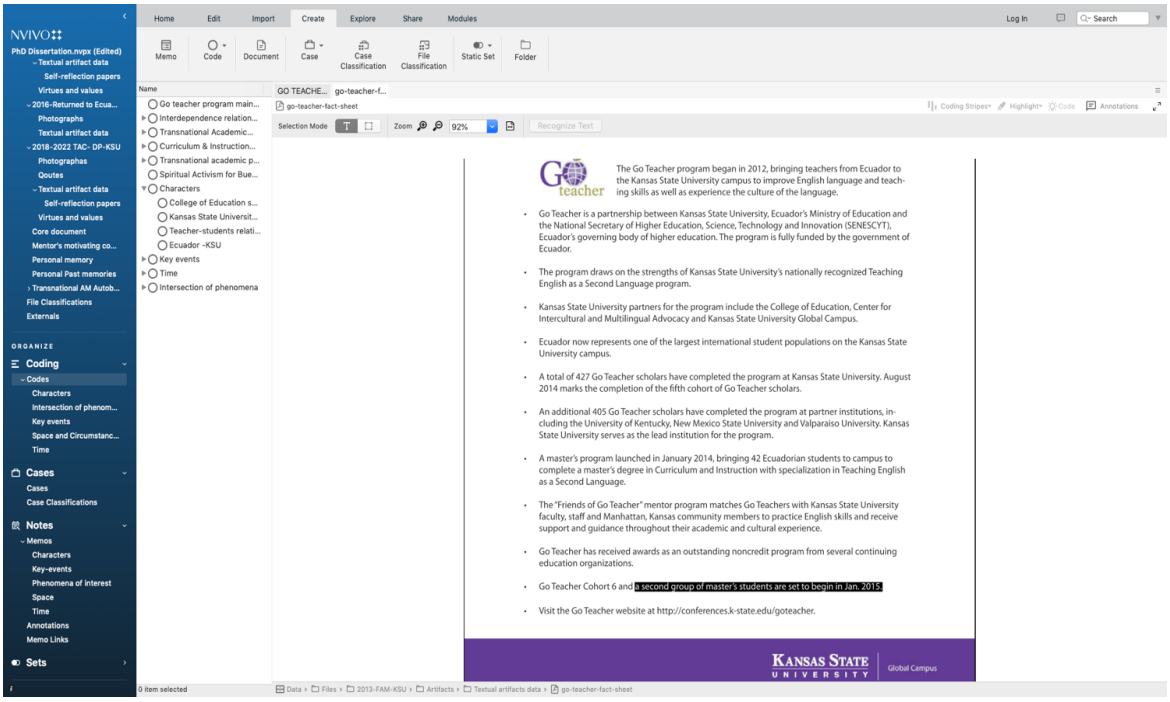
Data management, collection, and analysis are dynamically interconnected to inform and modify each other. Once I imported and organized substantial data sources into the *timelines* and *thematic categories* NVivo files, I also created a list of memos. Memos are placeholders through which I documented my thoughts, hunches, guesses, connections I made with readings, data sources in NVivo, or anything else outside of NVivo. My memos fell roughly into two categories. The first category of memos was connected directly to thoughts associated with each data source. It meant I had a memo associated with that particular code topic for every source I considered a source of information. This kind of memo attachment allowed me to write around the data with theoretical and methodological reflections and any other connection I was making to whatever seemed relevant. The second category of memos was one general memo reflecting my thoughts on all data sources. I labeled that memo as a *transnational critical self-narrative portrait* as this reminded me, I was documenting overall theoretical, methodological, and substantive reflections around my entire study in whatever dis/orderly way I chose. Thus, memos, codes, and themes were created through NVivo while conducting inductive data analysis.

I coded, categorized, reflected, connected, and reached a deeper understanding of the data through a three-phase process. Under the five analytic steps, first, I created the codes which I named as *focus codes* including (1) Characters; (2) Time; (3) Space and Circumstances; (4) Key Events; and (5) Intersection of phenomena of interest. In this narrative analysis, the coding process might look different from more traditional understandings of coding as including only particular words, phrases, or *chunks* (Bhattacharya, 2015), associated with certain parts of textual

or multimedia data. However, as discussed above, one's epistemology drives how one pursues knowledge. As I had organized substantial data sources into the timeline and thematic categories files and subfiles, I started my self-narrative analysis process with a tendency toward non-linear thinking.

In the second phase, I coded the data indicating and implying each particular focus code. For instance, when I opened the *timeline file*, 2013-FAM-KSU, in NVivo, it instantly displayed the *thematic categories subfiles* with the imported and managed data for that specific *timeline*. For example, one of the thematic categories was *textual artifacts* from which I started to codify. Since coding is the process of identifying passages of text, either word, phrases, whole sections, or identifying timeframes in a video file or areas in an image, I allocated those in the corresponding *focus code* (characters) under categories once recognized as shown in Figure 5.1. This first phase assisted in making sense, reflecting, and interpreting my data more inclusively. Additionally, it facilitated the creation of my narrative portraiture themes.

Figure 5.1 Focus code Characters and its categories



Therefore, once I coded and categorized the data under each focus code, I proceeded to the third phase of the analysis, which identified the *central themes* that emerged across the five focus codes. These central themes represented my *self-narrative portraiture findings*. This analytical structure looks visually linear and hierarchical. However, each analytical step attained non-linear and clustered thinking.

Identifying the *characters* in my transnational academic journeys was crucial, as they became an essential part of the data analysis. Therefore, the first step of this analytical narrative strategy consisted of coding all *characters* identified across all personal memory, self-observational and self-reflective, and external raw data in each *autobiographical timeline file*. I extended this analysis based on the notion that characters can be explicitly or not present in the story (hidden characters) (Rodrigues-Doran & Jacobs (2020). Thus, this analytical step of identifying characters was guided by the *Key-words: What to look for* criteria from the table guide suggested by Rodríguez-Doran and Jacobs (2020). This same process of analysis continued with the rest of the *focus codes*. Therefore, I refer briefly to the critical points for each one.

On the focus code *Time,* which is the second analytical step, I applied the principles of the autobiographical timeline from Chang (2016). Researchers should try to capture how the stories were told to them when developing stories, and some narratives might not follow a linear pattern (Goldstein, 2012). Additionally, timelines might need to have different layers when exploring processes involving other people and capturing macro influences. Timelines can thus be simple or complex, involving diverging paths and gaps. I then coded my timelines by looking for and identifying references to time and moments of relevant events, actions, and experiences encompassing my ten years of living among academic mobilities. My research focus was an

essential guidepost in this analytical timeline process. It gave me a sense of time explicitly or identifiable (2013, 2015, 2018) or implicitly (when I was studying at the Universidad de Cuenca), which I valued in the context of the narrative as a whole.

The third step, *orientation in space and circumstances,* invites researchers to identify the orientation signs (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). To do this, I coded all the data sources that oriented my self-narrative in space and circumstances. Space can be understood as macro-geography (cities, countries, continents), as micro-space (a bedroom, a desk, across the road), or it can be a virtual space (online, a state of mind, an emotional space) (Rodríguez-Doran & Jacobs, 2020, p. 617). Thus, in this analytical step, I created categories representing orientation clearly, as in the phrases "I came to Kansas State University" or "I lived 35 miles away from my hometown". In this second sentence, the implication of 35 miles away' gave me a different quality that I considered analyzing in the context of the whole story.

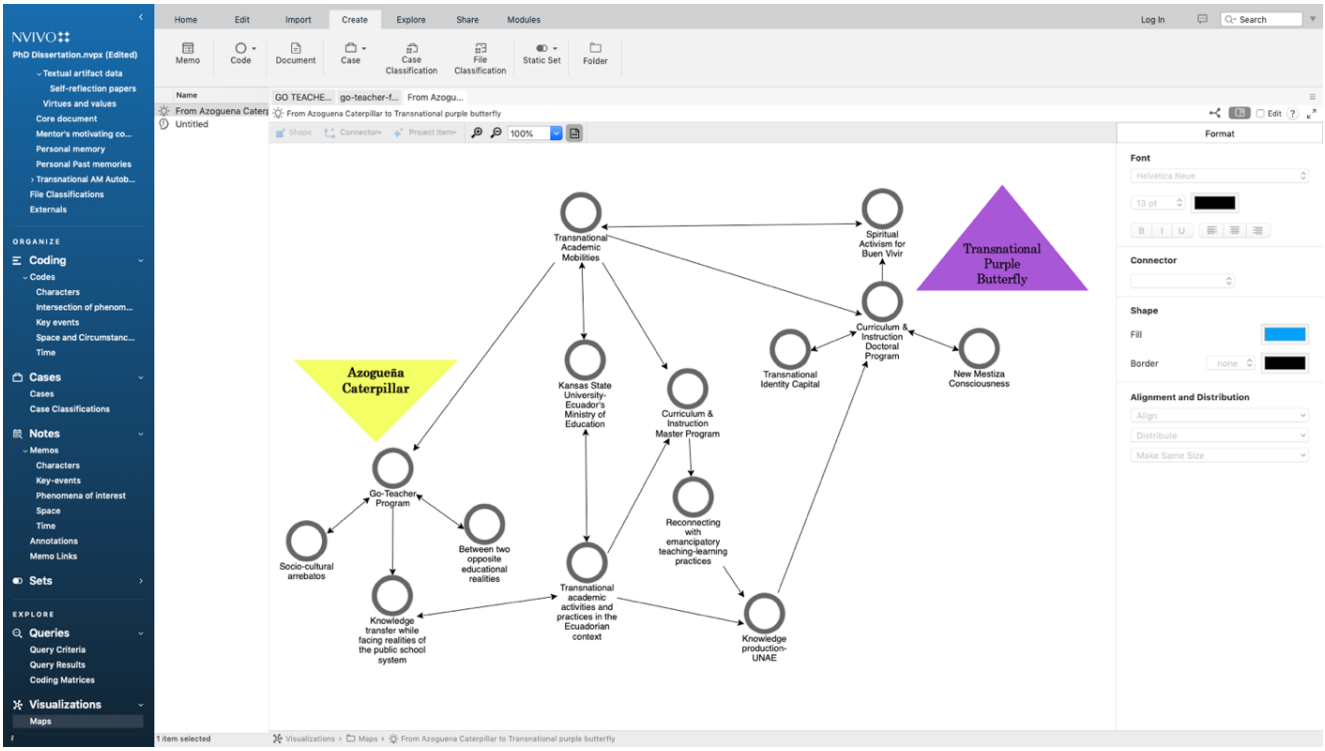
Another step in this analogical method is *Key events/ turning points*. Concerning the storyline, Rodríguez-Dorans and Jacobs (2020) suggest identifying key events and turning points. The storylines include various events or actions, but not all stand out or help understand the 'why' within the research question. Then, my key events were coded regarding meaningful relationships, changes in my socio-cultural and academic lifestyle; inner and outer changes; and individual or external influences (such as the introduction of new legislation, economic or political instability, a change in educational practices, transnational activities to increase social awareness, etc.). Within this process, I became self-aware of how internal and external influences interacted; helped develop a holistic and in-depth understanding of the interdependence of (mobile academics) individuals like me and my environments moving through time.

The last step, *intersection of phenomena*, refers to the criteria of looking for how or why phenomena of interest are narrated, conceptualized, and experienced as well where phenomena of interest are located; and the intersection of concepts and context. In this step, I looked for pre-identified themes of interest. Some referred to *transnational perspective*, *identity, transnational academic activities, experiencing the seven stages of the path of Conocimiento, self-transformative transitions, and educational practices for enhancing Buen Vivir*, etc. As I was working with multifaceted narrative data that involved several concepts, aspects, and factors, I proceeded to look at this intertwinement of ideas by locating how they operated separately in the narrative and coding them in the same way as the *characters* and *orientation in space* and *circumstances.*

This process required operationalizing these concepts according to the theoretical framework of the research (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020). One example of this is when coding from the textual artifacts, two concepts needed to be operationalized *identity* and *transfer knowledge* relationships. In this case, the theoretical framework highlighted those transitional activities because transfer of knowledge often come across in the narrative when multiple identities and allegiances mark the transactional individual and often travel between two or more countries, all of which have created sizeable networks of differing functions. Therefore, it was crucial to locate those transnationality episodes in the narration. Coding these elements (concepts, ideas, notions, factors) provided a visual indicator of the intersection among them. This intersection constitutes a core feature of the narrative portraiture method. It offers the opportunity to locate complex concepts that are often difficult to *pin down* (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020, p. 619).

This analytical process of narrative portraiture allowed me to analyze my data by understanding complexity and ambiguity within my narratives without losing context or sight of self-accounts and perspectives. In this sense, I developed this third phase from which my *self-narrative portraiture themes* emerged. By focusing on coding, memo writing, *drawing*, connecting elements, keeping the theoretical perspectives documented within NVivo to various parts of the data sources from the beginning, I had the option to visualize my self-narrative themes in another format. NVivo has a feature to create concept maps manually, which I considered an effective technique to visualize the connections between coded data in my se*lf-narrative portrait analysis*. Then I created a concept map from the themes of this analytical process as depicted in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Self-narrative portrait's themes



The narrative portraiture brings the person to the fore and highlights that a sole story's portrayal can be a medium to understand a research phenomenon and a valuable research output

in itself (Rodríguez-Dorans & Jacobs, 2020). Thus, the *key finding* of a research project is the *person's story* in *narrative portraiture*. Figure 5.2 illustrates my self-narrative findings contextualized in broader social-cultural and academic spheres. The significant self-narrative themes that emerged from the analytical process encompasses:

1) Interconnectedness: Kansas State University (North America) Ecuador's Ministry of Education (South America)
2) Metamorphic evolutions: three transnational academic mobilities (Go-teacher, Master, and Doctoral programs)
3) Transnational knowledge transferability: Ecuador educational context
4) Embodied awareness: path of Conocimiento -Buen Vivir (Andean Philosophy) through education.

As an analytical mechanism, this narrative portraiture method allowed me to map my data and visualize spaces where my narrations addressed the intertwinement of myself and macro-socio cultural and academic aspects. I identified my self-narrative within the macro-context where my transnational lived experiences happened; I benefited from a holistic analytical and interpretative process. According to Rodriguez-Dorans and Jacobs, 2020, researchers will be able to develop different kinds of portraits depending on their data. Consequently, this narrative portraiture method allowed me to acknowledge my data management, codification, and analysis in their complexity while simultaneously focusing on the phenomenon under investigation.

However, to inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and to the heart: How do (I) create a document (finding presentation) that is both authentic and evocative, coded and colorful? (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 243).

Portraiture methodology shares some similarities to arts-based research in combining the arts with social science research, particularly within educational research. Some educational researchers have extended the method of portraiture through art forms such as jazz and poetry. For example, Dixson (2005) combined critical race theory with portraiture through jazz to expand upon portraiture by discussing her experiences as a jazz studies student. Hill (2005) connected portraiture methodology and critical race theory through poetry. A handful of recent research publications have involved portraiture methodology in art education. For example, Buffington (2009) lauds portraiture's potential to act as a methodology that increases cross-cultural understanding when used within an art education context.

In addition, Smitka (2015), using examples from a study with portraiture methodology to research students' experiences as they draw portraits of their teacher, praises how portraiture methodology can serve to explore how one experiences delineations of self and other. Wilson and Lawton (2019) utilized duoethnography and a critical approach to portraiture methodology to explore and express their experiences as "Black women/artists/art educators/researchers" (p. 83). Thus, while there is growing recognition of the potential of portraiture within art education scholarship, there is room for expansion of the use of a critical arts-based approach to portraiture in education (Travis, 2020, p. 103).

Under the portraiture methodology concepts and acknowledging there are many forms of findings represented in qualitative research, these can be traditional or non-traditional. Thus, I assumed my *risk-taking philosophy* of presenting my self-narrative portraiture findings through *visual artwork*. I sought to inform, inspire, transform, to speak from my new mestiza consciousness to the heart of other souls by presenting an evocative, coded, and colorful *self-narrative portrait artwork* with *poetic composition*.

Therefore, aligned to epistemology, theoretical framework, and methodology I chose to create a self-portrait painting through one of the forms of arts-based research, which is *visual art*. There has been growing interest in applying artistic approaches to qualitative inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Creative forms such as poetry, music, visual art, drama, and dance have successfully been used in various research disciplines. Artists have incorporated research conventions into art-making and design processes (Hannula, Suoranta, & Vandén, 2005). Arts-based research has also known a considerable uptake in social, education, health care, and behavioral sciences (Brazg, et al., 2010; Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Hornsby-Minor, 2007). Researchers have started using artistically inspired methods of data collection, analysis, or reporting in their research projects, particularly in the area of participatory research practice.

Frayling (1993) identifies three categories targeted to art and design research. One of them refers to study for art and design, referring to projects in which reflection embodies the process of creating. The end product is an artifact that visually, iconically, and imaginatively communicates knowledge. For example, paintings or pictures on pop art culture; music records related to the flower power, punk movement, etc. The application of *visual art* for the presentation of my findings authenticates my critical/decolonial thinking by merging artistic practices with autoethnographic research. By engaging on a series of examples of qualitative research scholars that combined art and scholarship, I interpreted my narrative self-portrait themes by conceptualizing and drawing a visual artwork and identifying it as my *Transnational Academic Metamorphic Self-portrait Artwork.*

Visual art is one of the forms identified in arts-based research. It can further divide into two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and time-based visual art. Each category offers a variety of options artists/researchers can draw from when applying artistic forms in their (visual) research

projects. For example, two dimensional are Photovoice (Wang & Hannes, 2014), Photocomics (Toroyan & Reddy, 2005), Drawing, and Painting (Boydell et al., 2015). Common types of two-dimensional visual art are photography, painting, drawing, comics, collage, and graphic novels. Drawing and painting can be seen as meaning-making processes "intricately bound up with power relations, social experiences, and technological interactions" (Guillemin, 2004, p. 275).

Human experiences are embodied and multilayered; thus, documenting human experience requires more than presenting an existence in text, analyzed through literary and theoretical lenses (Bhattacharya, 2015, p. 23). My understanding of arts-based research enabled me to incorporate multiple data sources to represent my findings in an artistic format. Scholars who are not positivists seek approaches to data management, analysis, and representation reflective of their epistemologies. It could include but is not limited to creative, expansive, decentered, nonlinear, thoughtful approaches to findings representation.

Eventually, reflecting on the performative elements of my self-narrative's findings, I created a *two-dimensional visual art* form through *drawing and painting*. The central focus in this process was to construct a visual art that represented my research questions and study purpose. Therefore, through my *Transnational Academic Metamorphic Self-portrait Artwork* and the composition of a poem by taking out my "poetic self", I inform how the transnational progressive learner manifests itself within my lived experiences about the intersectional ethnographic spaces where I have interacted. Likewise, it manifests the ways my transnational lived experiences apprise my interpretations between postcolonial educational practices found in Ecuadorian education and the achievement of academic excellence for a culture of harmony, equity, solidarity, and environmental consciousness as the core of *Buen Vivir* (Alli Kawsay).

Transnational Academic Metamorphic Self-portrait Artwork

With a transnational decolonizing voice

With the voice of the new mestiza consciousness

With my language silenced for a long time

I recite:

Ecuador me viste nacer y crecer como oruga Azogueña
y aunque me encuentre ausente de tus tierras,
yo se que estarás allí cuando yo vuelva
cuando vuelva para volar sin fronteras

Un día parti mirando al cielo,
entre amalgamas de arrebatos y sueños
supliqué valentía para endurar un proceso
ese proceso
que llegó a remolinar mis pensamientos

Valiente e ingenua al mismo tiempo
Con filosofía Andina
llegue a las del Occidente
y con la década ganada
a conectarme con la academia anhelada

Interdependencia reforzaba la transnacionalidad
actors académicos (*Edcats*) interactuando con la interculturalidad
y yo móvil académico negociando my identidad

Articulando y tejiendo dentro
de mis tres crisálidas
yo
avanzaba derribando barreras
solucionando mis inconciencias

revolucionando mis pensamientos
cultivando nuevos sentimientos
evolucionando mi seres que
cambiaron mis realidades

Deconstruyendo las grandes hazañas
de mi educación histórica
traía conmigo conocimiento frío colonizado codificado
llevaba conocimiento crítico-reflexivo afectivo encarnado
aprendiendo a reconstruir caminos idializando posibilidades
rechazaba practicas de poder transcendental
y cultivaba educación desde la empatía y la ètica profesional

Cruzada entre la territorialidad y globalidad
estrechaba lazos de trans/nacionalidad
develando contradicciones en espacios de aprendizaje
imaginaba diálogos de saberes en todo lenguaje

Descubriendome a mi mismo como *Otro*
alcancé la libertad y consciencia espiritual
que me dió fuerza para verme igual y
la creatividad para reconcerme diferente
por el camino de conocimiento transnacional
en espacios abatidos por la desigualdad

Es hora de volar
Con mis alas moradas
asumiendo mi espíritu activo
abranzando mi nueva consciencia mestiza
gratitud infinita a
los protragonistas

de estas transiciones metamórficas
que me llevaron a
educarme pare el *Buen Vivir*
por la convivencia,
el reconocimiento
y la inter-relación
con la vida
en todas sus expresiones

Con la integralidad de las relaciones
la centralidad de la vida
y la ecología de saberes
Aprendí a pensar bien,
A sentirme bien,
Y hacerlo bien
No hay cambio sin compromiso
No hay transformación sin rupturas
Valió y siempre valdrá la pena
Tener un gran Corazón de *Edcat-Azogueña*

Ecuador
you saw me born and grow
as an Azogueña caterpillar
and although I am absent from your lands,
I know you'll be there when I come back
when I return to fly without turning back

One day I left looking at the sky,
between amalgams of ruptures and dreams
I beg for courage to endure a process
that process
that came to swirl my beings

Brave and naive at the same time
with Andean philosophy
I came to the West
and with the *Won Decade*
to connect with my academic self

Interdependence reinforced transnationality
academic actors (*Edcats*) interacting with interculturality
and I academic mobile negotiating my identity

Articulating and weaving within
my three chrysalides
I
advanced knocking down walls
solving my unconsciousness
revolutionizing my thinking
cultivating new feelings
evolving my selves that

changed my realities

Deconstructing the great deeds
of my historical education
I brought with me
cold colonized codified knowledge
but took it back
a critical-reflective affective embodied one
learning to rebuild paths idealizing possibilities
I rejected practices of transcendental power
by cultivating education
from empathy and professional ethics

In between territoriality and globality
I strengthened ties of trans/nationality
revealing contradictions in learning spaces
I imagined dialogues
of all knowledge in all languages.

Discovering myself as *Other*
I reached my mestiza consciousness
that gave me
strength to see myself equal and
creativity to recognize me as different
in spaces devastated by inequality

It's time to fly
with my purple wings
I assume my active spirit
I embrace my new mestiza consciousness
infinite gratitude to the protagonists

of these metamorphic transformations
who led me to Educate myself
for Good Living
for coexistence, recognition
and the inter-relationship
with the life
in all its expressions

Understanding the integrity of relationships
the centrality of life
the ecology of knowledge
I learned to think well
to feel good,
and make it right

There is no change without commitment
There is no transformation without ruptures
It was worth it, and will always be
to have *a big Edcat-Azogueña heart*

This transnational academic metamorphic *self-portrait artwork* symbolizes my empirical experience with transnational practices and self-transformations throughout ten years of living in the path of Conocimiento (knowledge) and border thinking. Through this artwork, I intended to embed my voice within the text and image so the audience could experience a deeper understanding and empathy with the complex realities that a transnational/international academic mobile like me undergoes when living between world-views.

The portrait's drawing is placed in a social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist (myself) and the subject (myself), each one negotiating the

discourse and shaping the evolving image (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). While conducting my self-narrative data analysis, at the same time that I was making meaning connecting the codes, memos, categories, and themes, I interpreted them by drawing and writing words or phrases around them.

For instance, when my first narrative portraiture theme emerged (Interconnectedness: Kansas State University (North America) Ecuador's Ministry of Education (South America), I did some sketches outlining my interpretations, understandings, and reflections on it. While sketching, I wrote vital words and short phrases echoing my ideas, thoughts, and feelings on the emerging image. Sketching was a constant back-and-forth process among the four self-portrait themes. The primary purpose through this sketching process was to construct self-portrait images that reflect my research questions and purpose of study aligned to my ontology, epistemology, and methodology perspectives. Once I finished sketching each self-portrait narrative theme drawn in separate pieces of paper, I selected the drawings that evoked significant value to my autoethnographic study outcome and thus promoting understanding and generating knowledge.

After putting the sketching pieces together and compiling them into one single drawing, I did the last step by adding a name, symbols, and colors representing significant connections among each other, making the self-portrait see itself as a whole representation. From the beginning of my data analysis, I contacted a well-known local plastic artist from Azuay-Ecuador who could embrace my self-portrait sketching and artistic impression. Through his artistic ability, he fully captured the composition and essence of my sketching by painting it on canvas. His technique was acrylic texture pan de Oro, 39x 31' inches unique edition. In addition, I included artifacts (photos) of sketching and painting moments documented throughout the complete artistic process in the Appendix section.

Poetry takes the existence of truths within attitudes, feelings, or ideas (Harmon, 2011) and illuminates them through prose that speaks to the mind and heart of readers. As part of this self-portrait artwork, I felt the need to write a poem that evocatively speaks to the mind and soul of the audience by remaining faithful to the essence of the research outcomes being presented. Thus, this expressive use of poetry allowed me to articulate rich contextual and concrete realities of my transactional lived experiences more fluidly and emotively without altering the analysis and interpretation of the study in fundamental ways.

Therefore, engaging with poetic perspectives encourages scholars to embrace the craft of poetry and incorporate rhythm, form, metaphor, and other poetic techniques to enhance their teaching, education, and research (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2003). These ways of working with traditional data forms challenge Western epistemic traditions that claim the knower is detached from the known and objective. In this way, poetic inquiry (representations) suggests decolonizing knowledge production (Mbembe, 2015). As researchers draw from poetic qualities of being, metaphorical wondering, and pay different attention to the data, the knowledge emerges transformed (Butler-Kisber, 2010). However, the researcher/poet can change too (van Rooyen & d'Abdon, 2020). Creating meaningful, vibrant, creative, and poetic texts makes it possible to engage broader and more varied audiences than those typically reached by conventional academic outputs.

Transnational Academic Accountability and Value

Being accountable and trustworthy in transnational/international work is challenging because of how academic systems operate and the lack of *Latina* transnational academic mobiles representations within those structures. In this autoethnographic study, I positioned myself as an Ecuadorian transnational academic, living between two opposite socio-cultural and educational

societies. Although I claim to speak only for myself, I cannot ignore that I still voice as a representative of the transnational/ international (Latinas) academic scholars. My accountability lay primarily with transactional migrant scholar experiences and realities when crossing borders to achieve academic excellence and professional growth through educational mobility programs and migratory *arrebatos.*

Studies on *micro-transnationalism*, which means the reality experienced by migrants and their communities when crossing borders, have been overlooked or marginalized among most fields of studies. In this sense, I aimed to construct this self-narrative study with the best effort to create knowledge that prioritizes international voices and values international (Andean) knowledge perspectives. Thus, I attempted to disrupt the power structures by prioritizing my marginal view, informing how knowledge is produced within transactional academic migrants, and demonstrating how it intersects with transnational socio-cultural, political, and economic processes.

The practicality of my relationships with other transnational/international scholars and the reality of their academic migrant experiences have been essential events of accountability. My constant interaction with international scholars from different nations (Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, Pakistan, Ghana) alerted me to future research topics beyond this autoethnography's scope. Thus, as I engage in the true spirit of this transnational academic space, these are necessary actions of accountability. I am empathetic to the transnational/international community and their identities, positionalities, the path of *Conocimiento*, and aspirations to achieve *Buen Vivir* through quality educational and professional programs. It was satisfying to have had accountable academics within my *chrysalises* who were eager to navigate these

transnational landscapes with me as they intersect with academic excellence, professional development, and quality education within higher education.

The Value

From a Transnational perspective, the primary value of this work is that Northern and Latin American educator actors might have the opportunity to see transnational perspectives woven into the field of professional education. They will have options for reflecting on academic aspects that at some points have not been considered previously. This work is a resource that is contextualized in the present professional landscape and more socio-culturally synchronous. It can be seen as valued to consider some adaptation for our specific trans/national and international academic communities.

Potentially, it could be a new starting point for the Ecuadorian government administration to emphasize the continuous improvement of education at all levels. Public funds must be invested efficiently in intangible human talent with the mentality that equal education of excellence promotes knowledge and solutions to social problems.

Academic excellence is evidenced in the generation of effective research processes by the universities of the public system, which guarantees the educational quality in the students, efficiency, and administrative effectiveness, which directs higher education institutions in a systematic improvement process. It would also mean reengineering universities to spend much less on bureaucracy and more on academics. It is critical to improve the quality and democratization of higher education by having access to technology and creating knowledge through investment in science, technological development, and innovation.

It is necessary to encourage research, establish instruments that promote the social economy of knowledge and revalue the role of educators, researchers, and innovators in our

society. It is a qualitative leap, and the goal is for higher education to rethink educational policy and practices differently, in inclusive and respectful ways. It enables processes for building dialogue in harmony and respect for the diverse and multiple horizons beyond the vision of modern and modernizing (Viaña, 2011). It will allow us to build a less unequal society and an authentic practice of interculturality where interdependence and exchange between cultures are equitable under conditions of equality and respect.

In a broader sense, this transnational autoethnographic study allows people to see yet another way to decolonize, construct, deconstruct, reconstruct, and negotiate their identity construction. It is valuable to add a unique slice of transnational life to the growing body of literature that attempts to rationalize how we make meaning to the words intercultural, transcultural, culture, diversity, identity, and multiculturalism in academia.

Taking Flight with My Purple Wings

> Little butterfly: " You are also very pretty,"
>
> Beth: "I'm not pretty," "I'm a simple green caterpillar, nothing more."
>
> Little butterfly: "Of course not! –You have the most beautiful brown eyes I have ever seen, and when you are a butterfly, you will be a very beautiful butterfly."
>
> Beth: “Being a butterfly myself? - Asked the little caterpillar confused - how can that be possible?"

It was possible with the joint force of protagonists and accomplices interconnected by the purpose of making my life story transformative. Those individual souls who bolstered my heart and energized my spirit while confronting myself in between realities and self-identities that emerged throughout my path of Conocimiento. I went through stages of mutation within my *three chrysalises* (Go-teacher, Master, and Doctoral programs) to grow my resilient, borderless

purple wings. I began decolonizing my academic journey as an *Andean caterpillar* banished from my "comfortable" zone in the Ecuadorian highlands and abruptly rooted in legendary violations of colonialist minds and intellectual piracy.

Knowledge has been a source of infinite strength for my reconstruction and transformation in which I came to understand and know my-self and make sense of the world. I have been a work in progress, under destruction and construction by living in-between subjectivities, shifting my consciousness, and maturing transgressive identities. I reimagined my personal self, ideal self, and transcendent self within North-South American societies of divergent academic cultures with delirious imaginative thoughts. I matured as a progressive transactional/international scholar by living in struggles, traumas, problems, and challenges encountered in each one of my transitional metamorphic stages. I struggled to be fully who and what I am, act out of that potential, strive for wholeness, and understand the fragments and the whole of my being. I struggled to simultaneously cope with the messy changing conditions and disturbances in my academic and professional life and live with my obstacles when I was not enough to overcome them.

My endless alteration within my *chrysalises* triggered the development of new knowledge and Conocimiento or lucid living by becoming fully aware of reality's fictitious nature while performing transnational daily practices. Moreover, by living my academic experiences rationally, I entered in a state of constant mental and emotional alertness which increased my dual consciousness to interact with different ways of perceiving, knowing, feeling, and acting in between societal environments. Reconciling with new knowledge perspectives meant linking the pieces and mapping the journey of my body, mind, and soul to expand awareness on the crises that I, along with my *gente* (people), face daily and have faced for generations when trying to

deal with traumas of classism, racism, marginalization, delegitimization, alienation, patriarchal domination and other accompanying violations. I became aware of how the legacy of these violations has left us a *post-traumatic* educational syndrome and various socio-cultural *disfunctions* (Anzaldúa, 2015). More than ever, I have come to recognize that the purpose of education is not only to fight against oppression or domination but to heal wounds and scars imposed by those by emphatically cultivating individual and collective growth as a foundation for harmony and balance.

Throughout my persistent back and forth journeys, I understood that identity is a framework for a complex composition that melds together disparate persons. It is an ongoing activity of constructing an ordered latticework of time, space, and emotional climate of stringing together a series of scenes and experiences and holding all these together by memory (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 185). I learned by decolonizing my identity because the thinking shape-shifting power enabled me to shift my selves. With my new mestiza consciousness, I became a being with other distinctive characteristics, making my identity fluid, not static.

My long-lasting interaction within the spaces of the *College of Education* empowered me to know how to stand at the center and voice my intentions to increase awareness of spirit, recognize our interrelatedness, and work for transformation. It erupted the roaring force of my collective creativity and intellectual capacity to heal my wounds of *desconocimiento* (unawareness), indifference, and commodity, which cleared my vision to understand the threatening forces that create oppression and division between us. It insisted on opening my throats to empower those who fear speaking out, raise my voice by my witnessing, create purposeful interdependence, and pay respect to those whose backs served as bridges so that I cured myself of intellectual captivity, internal exile, and indifferent consciousness.

Besides, I have broadened my scholarly self by learning to read the present moment whatever I needed to know about life in different socio-cultural realities and existences. I learned by decoding and re-encoding messages for solving my ambiguities which required a paradigm shift to see the problem differently. Truth is relative because different cultures believe different things. I object to one person who possesses the "real "truth and uses their claim to dominate others. Progressive metamorphic evolution results in loss of identity, and identity loss means psychic extinction, loss of self-esteem, self-authority, and authenticity to alienation (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 179).

Therefore, this transformative autoethnography embodies self-representation and the production of writing, knowledge, memory, imagination, consciousness, identities, and the political resistance and agency of the female-post colonial trans/national Other, particularly the Ecuadorian/mestiza. Within this *década ganada*, I have created a new story and a new agenda to start acting from being an other-sider, halfway between complete outsider and an insider. My chief form of orientation to the world is having an active spirit to explore connections, engage in *diálogo de saberes* (dialogue of all knowledge), contribute to knowledge transfer and production, creating trans/national collaborations and inform the educational needs of my people. As Anzaldúa (2015) manifests, we must practice "theory in the flesh" to transform curriculum and education, which sees the practice as a form of theorizing and theorizing as a form of practice. Today, we all must bridge the chasm between campus political activity and grassroots activism, women and men, us and others of whatever race or culture they may be. Through our scholarship and creative expression, we must be willing to translate across (mis) perceived differences instead of highlighting our separate worlds and facilitating and obstructing dialogue and collaboration. Today we are poised on the brink of our flowering. We need to increase our

capacity for awareness, vision, presence, and compassion and integrate reflective and contemplative practices into daily professional routines. For this, our historical moment, we need to clarify collective and personal identities and visions (Anzaldúa, 2015).

Everchanging within my chrysalises, I felt that I was an alien from another planet dropped on a foreign society's lap. But for what purpose?

To be accountable by acting out my spiritual activism and joining others' efforts to create a better world. If we educate people to learn to live *Buen Vivir desde adrentro (Good living from within)*, it can happen. I call it: *The world of the good living from within.*

By changing ourselves, we change the world. The process of acquiring Good Living from within is a path of a two-way movement–going deep into the self and expanding into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self, and a reconstruction of society. However, I do not know how to resolve this in myself. I can only speculate by trying to integrate the experiences that I have had or have been witness to and try to make sense of why we belittle each other. In short, I am trying to create a relief not out there somewhere but in my inborn. I am trying to make peace between what has happened to me, what the world is, and what it should be.

Now I am a two-winged wind-swayed bridge, a butterfly inhabited by whirlwinds, purposes, and aspirations to cultivate a world of the good living from the heart as some particular academics' hearts which I had the honor and fortune to empathize with throughout my path of knowledge. This transnational academic identity is consequent to my future learners, my *gente,* my gender, the trans/national, international scholars, other mestizas' consciousness, and the new age.

However, a short reflection on educating for *Buen Vivir desde adentro* would be that we would have to educate to create societies united by one heart. It means being at peace, in

harmony and balance, internally and with everything that surrounds humans. It means knowing how to live fully, learning how-to live-in harmony with our mother earth, the cosmos, life, and history, and in balance with all forms of existence in permanent respect. The teaching of our grandfathers and grandmothers and ancestors is not only rational; it has the impetus and strength of experience, the clarity of mind and heart. We have to go toward something, somewhere. We could fly towards that educational world that allows us to reconstitute our strength, vitality, spirit, and self-consciousness to know who we are, how we live, with what forces, and who accompanies us. Living education from within makes us more empathic and compassionate makes us reflect that we must live united by a purpose: to be promoters of harmony and equilibrium with life in its fullness.

Think of me as the *Good-Living-Borderless Butterfly* with a new mestiza consciousness and Andean mystic leanings.

I take flight with my purple wings
alert and aware
of not falling again into captive fears
with transparent thought
and the pedagogy of hope
I spot the scope
of my active voice
for decolonizing
other codified caterpillars' souls

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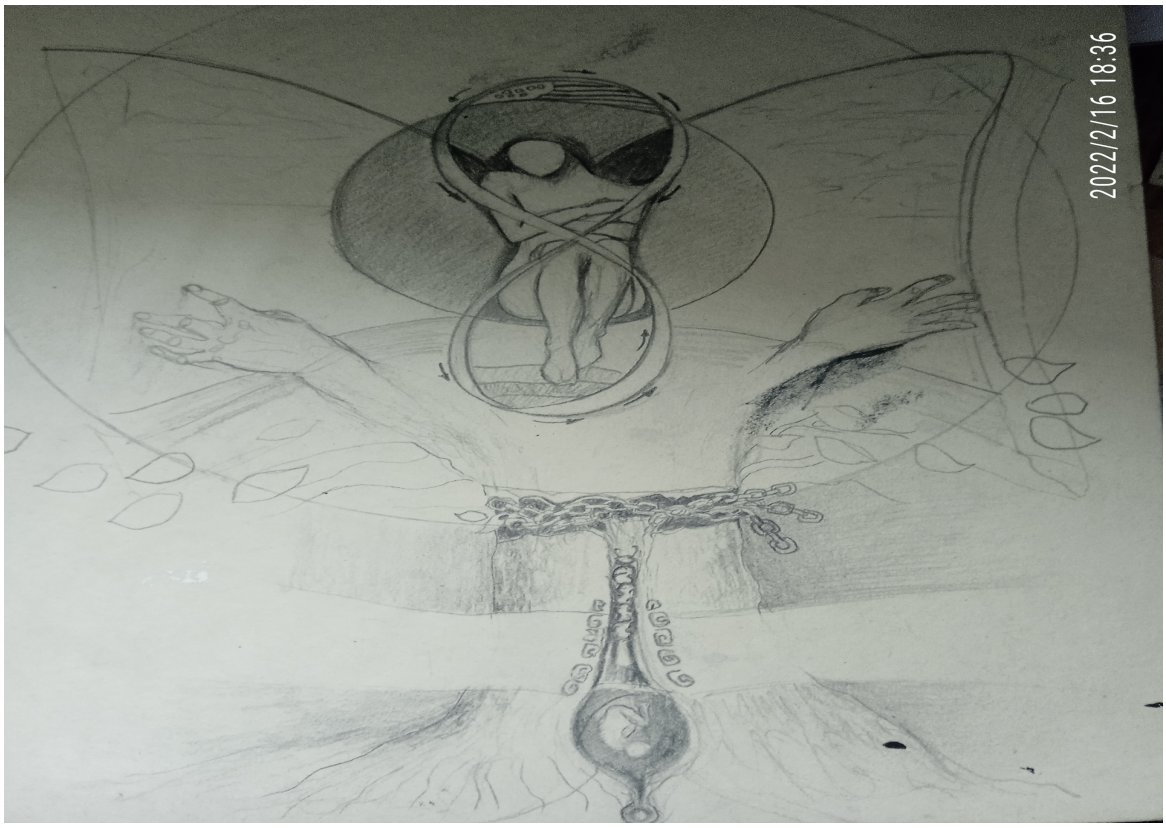
Appendix A - Self-Portrait Artwork Process Photographs

Appendix A Photograph A.1

Appendix A Photograph A.2

Appendix A Photograph A.3



Appendix A Photograph A.4

Appendix A Photograph A.5

Appendix B - Certificate of Authenticity

Appendix B.1 Self-portrait Painting Certificate of Authenticity

Certificate of Authenticity

FERNANDO CARRILLO

Plastic artist, Certifies that the aforementioned work, of the following characteristic was made in the year 2021.

Tittle: Interweaving the America: A transnational metamorphosis auto ethnography to transgress Ecuadorian education for Buen Vivir.

Technique: Acrylic texture pan de oro on canvas

Editions: Unique

Dimensions: 39" x 31" inches

Signature of the Author

Galeria de Arte

Cuenca December 2021

Appendix B.2 Literature Review: Transnationalism as a Theoretical Framework Chart

Transnationalism Theory	**- Perspective to analyze migratory phenomenon based on the relationships between the place of origin and destination (Faist, 2000; Kearney, 1995; Portes et al., 2003; Schiller et al., 1992).**
	-Migrants create significant and uninterrupted ties with people, groups, and institutions located in the country of origin, as with those who have migrated to other countries. - "Migrants' cultural, economic, political, and social experiences" (Riccio, 2001, p. 583) . - "Migrants build and rebuild their lives simultaneously in more than one society" (Caglar, 2001, p. 607).
	-Significant to consider the migrant individual as a unit of analysis (activities and lived experiences) to understand the different structures of transnationalism and its effects (Guarnizo et al., 2003). -Benefits of transnational activity for migrants and countries of origin and destination (emotional, economic benefit like knowledge transfer, open new avenues in economic relations, interdependence between the two (Carvajal, 2002; Eckstein & Najam, 2013; Levitt, 2001). -Macro-transnationalism vs Micro- transnationalism (reality experienced by migrants) (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998).
Transnational academic mobility	-People moving across national boundaries that includes temporary stays abroad for research, learning, or teaching (home institution to one or several host institutions) (Robertson, 2010). -Academic journey across states where academics immerse in teaching- learning experiences, knowledge production and transfer (Alemu, 2020).

Transnational academic mobility	-Collaborative knowledge production, knowledge movement, and publication (Hamza, 2010; Krstić, 2012). -Develops personal, professional, and international experiences in teaching and research practices (Hamza, 2010; Sandgren et al., 1999). -Mobility is an imperative experience that leads academics to a breakthrough and a paradigm shift in knowledge creation (Altbach, 2007). - More systematic for academic capitalism (Cantwell & Kauppinen, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, **2004)**
Transnational Identity Capital	- "Process of shifting from hard, scientific, explicitly codified knowledge to organic, intrinsic, implicit, reflexive, spatialized knowledge-namely embodied and encultured knowledge" (Kim, 2010, p. 589). -Vital catalyst to generate new knowledge, creative destruction and reconstruction of the paradigms of academic work (Kim, 2017). -To possess divergent and implicitly expansionist orientation and epistemic paradigms. "A reflexive; an in-between stance, and it hints at forms of the "objectivity" of an outsider" (Kim, 2017, p. 994). - Transcends national cultural boundaries.
Buen Vivir/ Sumak Kawsay	-Develops from the demands for equality and social justice, recognition, appreciation, and dialogue of peoples and their cultures, knowledge, and ways of life. Allows happiness and perpetuates cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equity, and solidarity. "A way of life in harmony or life in fullness" (Cuestas-Caza, 2018; Inuca Lechón, 2017).

Education for *Buen Vivir* society	-That contributes to achieving a democratic, equitable, inclusive, peaceful society, promoting interculturality, tolerance of diversity, and respect for nature (Ministry of Education, 2010). -Practices of other epistemologies, knowledge, ways of being and understanding the world; other ways of learning and living. -From different rationalities, pedagogical practices necessary to live the difference with equality and dignity. -Pedagogies of relevance, autonomy, resistance, emancipation allowing the development of human potential and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all people.