



Bilingual, Bicultural, Not Yet Binational

Undocumented Immigrant Youth in Mexico and the United States

By Jill Anderson, PhD

Bilingual, Bicultural, Not Yet, Binational: Undocumented Immigrant Youth in Mexico and the United States*

Working Paper

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
I. Introduction	5
II. “To Return”: A Crisis of Terms as Opportunity for (Re)Vision	7
III. Immigrant Youth in the United States <i>and</i> in Mexico	10
a. 1980-2015: The Rise of the Bicultural, Not Yet Binational Generation	10
b. Bicultural Immigrant Youth in Mexico	12
c. U.S. Citizen Children in Mexico	14
d. Mexican-born Immigrant Youth with DACA in the United States	14
e. Mexican-born Immigrant Youth without DACA in the United States	15
f. A Juxtaposition of Bicultural Immigrant Youth between 2005 and 2015	17
IV. Mexico’s Current Public Policies for Returning Citizens	19
a. Mexican Governmental Response: Crisis-Management vs. Integration	19
b. Integration via Education	25
c. Integration via Employment	29
d. International Mobility via Integration	31
V. Immigrant Rights as Transnational Rights	33
VI. Specific Recommendations	37
Glossary of Acronyms for U.S. & Mexican Government Institutions	39
References	41

Executive Summary

An entire generation of children, adolescents and young adults has been caught in the crucible of increasing criminalization of immigrants coupled with neoliberal globalization policies in Mexico and the United States. These are first- and second-generation immigrant youth who are bicultural, often bilingual, but rarely recognized as binational citizens in either of their countries.

In the United States, Mexican immigrants account for an estimated 28 percent of the immigrant population (the largest origin group) and 56 percent among the undocumented immigrant population (Zong and Batalova 2016). Since 2005, an estimated two million Mexicans have returned to Mexico after having lived in the United States, including over 500,000 U.S.-born children (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015, Jacobo and Espinosa 2015). As of 2005, the population of Mexican-origin immigrant youth in the United States (first- and second-generation) reached an estimated 6.9 million. They have come of age in conditions of extreme vulnerability due to their undocumented status or the undocumented status of their parents.

As of 2015, about 10 percent of the undocumented bicultural immigrant youth population has significant although precarious legal protections under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) while a little over 15 percent of Mexican-American immigrant youth now live in conditions of exile from the United States under automatic bans assigned to them or their caretakers post-deportation and return. The majority of undocumented immigrant youth live in the United States within the legal limbo between the two possibilities of “protected status” and “exile,” but under the constant threat of the latter.

A crisis of terms and a scarcity of accurate, quantitative data about undocumented, mixed-status, and in particular, deported/returning immigrants continue to challenge efforts to articulate and advocate for adequate public policies. We do know that the returning population since 2005 is younger, returns as a part of a family unit, returns under duress, has spent more years in the United States, and is predominately male.

The challenges that immigrant youth face in the aftermath of deportation and return are varied. Emotional distress, post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression and alienation are commonly described as key factors during the first months to years of return. These young people have experienced family separation, a sense of alienation, and human rights violations during detention and deportation. Systemic and inter-personal discrimination against deportees and migrants among the non-migrant population in Mexico can make an already challenging situation more difficult. For some, an accent, a lack of language proficiency in Spanish, and/or tattoos make it difficult to “blend in,” find jobs, or continue their studies. In addition to emotional and socio-cultural stress, there are also facing systemic educational, employment and political barriers to local integration and stability.

The Mexican federal government’s response to its returning citizens has exclusively emphasized crisis-management during the initial days of return and has been characterized

by an ad hoc response: re-naming old programs as opposed to re-imagining and adapting them to a decidedly new paradigm.

This paper gestures towards an alternative. The Mexican government can build on the constructive and successful models of policy design, programming and implementation within the Ministry of Foreign Relations (SRE) and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) amongst Mexican immigrants in the United States over the last twenty years. By replicating initiatives first taken abroad, the 45 SRE delegation offices across Mexico that are primarily dedicated to passport services might begin to collaborate with returning immigrant families and local institutions to include services that also support integration via legal identity, education, employment, public health, and cultural activities. Just as consulates across the United States have evolved to include and respond to the needs of immigrants and local institutions in the United States, the SRE delegation offices in Mexico can evolve with a focus on return immigrant families in their local and global contexts.

Furthermore, the U.S. and Mexican governments must collaborate on a multi-year binational commission of government actors, civil society leaders, academics, *and* members of transnational mixed-status immigrant families to produce a broad quantitative study of transnational families using differentiated indicators such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, language(s), self-proscribed identity, immigration status, educational aspirations, and public health. This study must move beyond, although not away from the emphasis on pathways to citizenship for Mexican immigrants in the United States, to focus on family reunification, education, and legal mobility for transnational families in transnational contexts.

Bicultural immigrant youth are an integral part of mixed-status transnational families who increasingly have members on both sides of the militarized U.S.-Mexico border. They need public policies that are crafted in terms of the recognition, unification (temporary or permanent) and integration of their families. Furthermore, their integration into the community of their choice must be predicated upon access to education (including higher education), employment, and international mobility *as* binational citizens. By re-framing the debate over immigration as a broader conversation about the constellation of public policy reforms needed to govern transnational movement and citizenship in the twenty-first century, we can better articulate just what is at stake in a major historical shift that has only begun.

I. Introduction

An entire generation of children, adolescents and young adults in mixed-status immigrant families in the United States has been caught in the crucible of increasing criminalization of immigrants and the rapid expansion of neoliberal globalization around the world. In the years following the economic restructuring of the regional economy, this generation's parents moved to the United States in the 1990s and 2000s as access to labor and livelihood shifted to cities, the U.S.-Mexico border zone, and the United States. These are first- and second-generation immigrant youth who are bicultural, often bilingual, but rarely recognized as binational citizens in the United States or Mexico.¹

Their increasingly diverse transnational realities demand that we find new strategies to approach the current crises that have arisen from twenty-plus years of well-funded public policies for controlled and criminalized immigration in the Americas. In what is surely a paradox for any healthy society and its governing bodies, just as the number of our immigrant youth has increased, their vulnerability has escalated. The policy recommendations in this paper seek to move beyond the seeming impasse between humanitarian concerns and national security initiatives towards policies that position the integration of immigrant youth and their families as a fundamental aspect of human security and transnational economic development.

Conventional wisdom defines the integration of immigrants in unilaterally national terms, either one or the other. This working paper gestures toward a model of integration that is fundamentally transnational, wherein immigrant youth exercise their citizenship, broadly defined, in multiple ways and places. Furthermore, even our concepts of immigrant integration have been skewed by the insidious criminalization of immigrants under which those who can or do successfully “integrate” into their local/national communities (via education, employment, socio-cultural and/or political participation) are defined against those who do not, i.e. integration vs. deportation. Our working concepts of immigrant integration can and must evolve to include transnational conceptualizations of access to opportunity *and* immigrant agency/mobility as widely recognized virtues instead of liabilities.

While the trends I discuss in this paper affect immigrant youth from multiple countries around the world, especially those with historical, (post)colonial, economic, and military ties to the United States (Golash-Boza 2015, 2016), I will focus on Mexico-United States immigration. Mexican immigrants account for an estimated 28 percent of the immigrant population (the largest origin group) and 56 percent among the undocumented immigrant population in the United States (Zong and Batalova 2016). Since 2005, an estimated two million Mexicans have returned to Mexico after having lived in the United States, including over 500,000 U.S.-born children (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015, Jacobo and Espinosa 2015). A public policy platform that focuses on our immigrant youth as potential binational citizens

¹ Although the term “immigrant youth” is most often limited to children between 0 and 18 years of age, this paper also includes young adults who have technically “aged” out of the statistical picture but whose identities and opportunities are directly tied to their formative experiences as immigrant youth in the United States.

might have positive implications for any number of other binational/transnational configurations in the United States and Mexico (Guatemala-Mexico, El Salvador-Mexico, Canada-Mexico, El Salvador-United States, Philippines-United States, Native American Nations-United States, Indigenous-Mexico, to name a few).

The interplay between biculturality, bilingualism, and binational political relations is complex and dynamic. I avoid static, absolute definitions of bicultural identity and bilingual aptitude. Mexican-American and American-Mexican immigrant youth are bicultural and bilingual in diverse ways that are ever evolving. Pamela is from Georgia and Michoacán, prefers bread to tortillas, and is studying psychology in Spanish at a university in Michoacán.² Luis Manuel arrived in Guadalajara speaking fluent Spanish, while his brother, Angel, accompanied him but spoke very little. Five years later, Angel still prefers English but is proud of his improved Spanish skills. Some immigrant youth are monolingual English speakers, while others speak accented Spanish but struggle to read and write Spanish at equivalent levels. Independent of the broad range of skills, bilingual and bicultural identity is a reality in these young people's lives—one that is valued and developed, or diminished and buried, depending on a host of personal and public contexts. In the best of circumstances, and often under trying conditions, immigrant young adults in the United States and Mexico are insisting on their bicultural and bilingual identities, even as the legal recognition of binational rights continues to be denied.

Furthermore, (bi)national citizenship is defined and practiced in multiple ways. Broadly defined, citizenship is a government-negotiated practice that includes rights and responsibilities (i.e. voting, government-authorized legal identities via official documents such as birth certificates and passports, tax obligations) and a socio-cultural practice also predicated upon certain rights and responsibilities (participation in public education, volunteer services in local communities, self-identification with the local/national communities, adherence to local values, laws and regulations, tax obligations). Within national contexts, immigrants are *not* citizens in a legal sense, although they often participate in citizenship practices in a socio-cultural sense. Immigrants participate in national economies differently than citizens, but with tax obligations and labor rights that overlap. The diversity and incredible lived experiences of bicultural immigrant youth and their families in Mexico and the United States today are pushing us to re-configure this outdated immigrant-citizenship dichotomy towards concepts of citizenship that are multi-national and mobile.

In the first section of this paper, I highlight the crisis of terms that has evolved from this system of immigrant/citizen categorization that obscures and dehumanizes our immigrant youth and families. In the second section, I bring together disparate demographic studies of undocumented immigrant youth, independent of immigration status and where on the continent they are currently living. Then, I provide an overview of the current public policies that respond or fail to respond to the needs and the potential of immigrant youth

² When sharing or quoting personal experience, I use names with the explicit permission of the person I interviewed. If the details or quote has been previously published, I also include the citation. In a few cases, I have changed the names upon request. Several of the young people I quote are also public spokespersons, tireless advocates, and published writers.

in Mexico. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of recent trends towards binational movement and citizenship in both countries and the implications for youth in the region, as well as specific recommendations for moving forward. Throughout the paper, I refer to the lived experiences and hard-won wisdom of the immigrant youth who inspired me to write it.

II. “To Return”: A Crisis of Terms as Opportunity for (Re)Vision

An analysis of a few of the terms we use to understand documented vs. undocumented immigration demonstrates the inadequate terminology that we count on to craft public policy around international immigration. It is a crisis of meaning as well as an urgent opportunity for (re)vision (Calderón Chelius 2012). The recent “return” of hundreds of thousands of people and their families further upends the “politics of categorization” that are used as tools for government administrators, academics, and civil society at large (Boehm 2016). While perhaps once useful and necessary in creating visibility and crafting policy and programs, the current hyper-legalized categories of immigration are approaching the absurd (Pérez 2015).³

The lack of an adequate framework is especially acute in regards to bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico. For second- and first-generation immigrant youth who have “returned” to Mexico with their families, the notion of “return” is erroneous. Second-generation immigrant youth are U.S. citizens, and while they have the right to Mexican citizenship via their parents, many have experienced obstacles “documenting” their identity and legal status once in Mexico (Jacobo and Espinosa 2015). First-generation immigrant youth, now as young adults, have little to no memory of their birth country, and can find themselves “undocumented” in Mexico for the purposes of access to education, employment, and healthcare (Anderson and Solis 2014, Truax 2015).

The concepts of “voluntary return” vs. “forced return” are also under-theorized and undifferentiated in the limited demographic data we have, the theoretical models we use, and, therefore, the public policy responses we are able to design.⁴ A voluntary return, one that was not government-mandated, in actuality could be a “forced return” due to the devastating deportation of a family member; a “semi-forced return” due to the threat of deportation, illness or death in the family, or other major obstacles; or, in some cases, a “planned return” with the benefits of familial support, a university acceptance letter, or a

³ While librarians and Republican lawmakers in the United States debate the usefulness of terms such as “illegal immigrant” and “illegal alien,” I understand the crisis of terms and what it allows us to see and not see, say and not say, to run even deeper and broader than the rightfully polemical debate over calling citizens of another country “illegal persons” or “aliens” (Aguilera 2016).

⁴ Immigration scholar, Jorge Durand, identifies four or five types of return migration on a global scale: “voluntary return,” “temporary workers return,” “trans-generational return,” “forced return,” and the “failed return” (2004). While useful in its attention to the complexity and importance of return, these terms do not accurately describe the complexity of moving to Mexico under a range of intersectional conditions for immigrant youth in the United States.

personal sense of national pride and responsibility. The realities behind “government-mandated” or “forced returns” are also complex and varied. Under current U.S. government policy, a person is “removed” under a deportation order that involves an armed escort under handcuffs and ankle bracelets to the international border. On the other hand, a person is “returned” when they sign a form that is confusingly called a “voluntary departure” and must move outside of the United States within a court-ordered period of time (usually 3-6 months).

The concept of “return” is further complicated by the transnational realities of today’s Mexican-American families. In a system that is constructed via what scholars Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego aptly name “legal violence,” predominately working-class families with indigenous and mestizo ancestry in Mexico are increasingly defined by a mix of immigration statuses in the United States and in Mexico: U.S. citizenship, Mexican citizenship, binational citizenship, permanent residency, temporary protection (open asylum cases, DACA, DAPA), undocumented, and the “doubly undocumented” (Menjivar and Abrego 2012, Mercado 2012). The current system not only stratifies access to employment and economic opportunity, it also creates differentiated discrimination within mixed-status families (Fix and Zimmermann 2001).

As of 2013, 9 million of the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States formed part of mixed-status immigrant families (“A Nation of Immigrants” 2013). While we do not have differentiated studies about the members of mixed-status families now residing in Mexico, trends suggest that a significant proportion of the two million who have returned since 2006 are members of mixed-status families now residing in Mexico, or divided by the border with members of the family in each country (Yrizar Barbosa and Alarcón 2015, Ojeda 2009).

In July 2015, the Mexican Ministry of Interior (SEGOB) and the Ministry of Foreign Relations (SRE) convened a forum on “Closing the Divide: Strategies to Support the Integration and Reinsertion of Immigrants,” a preliminary meeting to the Regional Conference on Migration. They invited two “Dreamers” to share their personal experiences. Gabriela Monje Lagunes—a recipient of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Advanced Parole and an IME-Beca to study at a university in Minnesota—shared her mixed-status family’s reality: “I have two jobs because I have a brother here in Mexico who I help; he is studying for a degree in Gastronomy and Cuisine, and I also help my parents to maintain a home, cars, and more family here in Mexico” (Monje Lagunes 2015).

Just as immigrant families are comprised of a mix of citizenship statuses, an individual can experience a range of citizenship protections, or lack thereof, across a lifetime. In terms of legal, national recognition of immigration/citizenship status, the distinction between “undocumented” and “documented” is increasingly blurred, chronologically and spatially. A person can be detained and deported for an arrest that occurred fifteen years earlier. Permanent residency in the United States is no guarantee against deportation. Luis Clemente was born in Guerrero and grew up in Houston, Texas. After an arrest and conviction at 18 years of age, his permanent residency was revoked and, in 2009, he was deported to a country he barely remembered (Clemente 2014). Young adults, like Sybil, a

former nurse's aide whose family lives in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, can be detained and deported while in the midst of the long wait for a family-sponsored visa. Temporary protected status in the form of DACA or asylum grants protection for a period of time, but with no clear path to citizenship. Finally, thousands of second-generation immigrants born in the United States are being *de facto* deported with their family members.

Furthermore, in the United States and in Mexico, the rights and responsibilities that seemingly pertain to the granting of nation-based "citizenship" and/or legal immigration status are actually distributed across a host of distinct institutions and legal categories (Escobar 2015). This becomes especially clear, and acute, in the context of two overlapping and interconnected scenarios: one) the right to primary and secondary public education and the cultural and institutional integration of undocumented immigrant minors until the legal definition of adulthood (in the United States and Mexico); and two) the return migration of mixed-status families to Mexico after several years in the United States and the vulnerabilities they face as ostensible Mexican citizens.

Finally, the current legal bureaucracies of immigrant categories and courts must be contextualized in terms of a violent disregard for immigrant youth across the region, where immigration status is used as a discretionary tool by government agents in the United States and Mexico to deprive young people of their rights, their freedom, and even their lives. Our politics of categorization no longer reflect the realities of immigrant families and youth in the Americas. We no longer have an adequate vocabulary to recognize, and therefore authorize and regulate immigration. Instead, the categorization of "legal/illegal," "undocumented/documented," and "immigrant/citizen" are increasingly used to criminalize and dehumanize the movement of individuals and families within and across international borders. The challenges that bilingual and bicultural youth in Mexico and the United States face in becoming binational citizens—the topic of this paper—cannot be separated from a continuum of legally-sanctioned violence that also underwrites the deportation, detention, disappearance, and even death of immigrant youth of indigenous and Central American origin.

The current initiative under the bilateral program, Frontera Sur, to prevent Central American youth from reaching the U.S.-Mexico border is a clear example of an international strategy wherein undocumented immigrant youth have been implicitly designated as expendable in the name of an idealized national security that predominately serves deregulated, transnational private enterprise (Varela 2015). The numbers of immigrant youth in for-profit detention centers across the United States, the numbers of immigrant youth detained and deported in Mexico, the numbers of immigrant youth who have been found but unidentified in mass graves across Mexico and in the U.S. border region, and the numbers of immigrant youth who have disappeared along the dangerous journey north all testify a silenced witness to a politics of disregard that criminalizes immigrants and erodes the legal status of national citizenship and authorized immigration within and across borders.

In the following sections, I gesture towards a new vocabulary that might allow us to better see, hear, and respond to all immigrant youth on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I

take two guiding terms as signposts. First and foremost, immigrant youth are **an integral part of mixed-status transnational families** with members on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. They need public policies that are crafted in terms of the recognition, unification (temporary or permanent) and well being of their families. Second, their integration into the community of their choice must be predicated upon access to education (including higher education broadly defined), employment, and international mobility **as binational citizens**.

III. Immigrant Youth in the United States *and* in Mexico

A related scarcity of accurate, quantitative data about undocumented, mixed-status, and in particular, deported/returning immigrants continue to challenge efforts to articulate and advocate for adequate public policies (Gandini et al 2015: 63-67). As Saskia Sassen notes in *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (2014), “the move from Keynesianism to the global era of privatization, deregulation, and open borders for some, [has] entailed a switch from dynamics that brought people in to dynamics that push people out.” The detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants is an example of a “key dynamic at the system’s edge...that is still [mostly] invisible to the statistician” (211).

In this section, I draw general estimates based upon the statistics that we *do* have regarding this generation on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I bring together the most recent studies of young people who are now in Mexico after having lived in the United States, the numbers of U.S. citizen children and adolescents who have moved to Mexico with their parents, the numbers of young people who have benefited from DACA since 2012, and the numbers of undocumented immigrant youth without DACA protections who are still in the United States. In so doing, I provide a sketch of a binational population of children, adolescents, and young adults that has yet to be recognized and named as such.

A. 1980-2015: The Rise of the Bicultural, Not Yet Binational Generation

If we take the age range for today’s bicultural immigrant youth as roughly between 0 and 35 years old, this generation was born in Mexico or the United States in the years since 1981. The 1980s mark the beginning of increasing economic ties between the United States and Mexico accompanied by increasing criminalization of unauthorized immigration across the international border.

The trajectories of this generation’s parents’ lives, and therefore their lives, were directly affected by the re-structuring of the Mexican economy, which began under the leadership of President Miguel de la Madrid from 1982 until 1988, laying the groundwork for the signing of NAFTA in 1994 (Délano 2011: 123-164). As Mexico’s political and economic elite began to move away from previous protectionist policies towards an economy more open to foreign investment and imports, deregulation and privatization, the patterns of circular migration between the United States and Mexico also began to change (Massey

2007).⁵ On average, the Mexican-born population grew by half a million a year between 1995 and 2005. Among the overall undocumented population in the United States as of 2005, an estimated 57 percent were of Mexican-origin and most arrived after 1990 (Passel 2005).

Simultaneously, this generation of immigrant youth, born on both sides of the international border, came of age as “crime-based removal” and immigration control gained legal and political ground in the United States (García Hernández 2015). The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) established punitive measures for unauthorized immigration and the hiring of unauthorized immigrants, along with the legalization of undocumented immigrants, many of whom stayed in the United States permanently. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and 1988, as well as the 1990 Immigration Act, further expanded the funding and the grounds for aggravated felonies and mandatory removal of immigrants (authorized and unauthorized) from the United States. In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) established mandatory deportation on further expanded grounds and bars to re-entry for anyone over 18 years of age who had been unlawfully present in the United States for six months (three-year ban), a year (ten-year ban), or with an aggravated felony conviction (permanent ban, or exile).⁶ The 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) added more legal mandates for removal, as did the 2001 PATRIOT Act (García Hernández 2015, Gonzalez 2016).

During and after the global economic crisis in 2007, the Obama Administration oversaw an escalation of interior apprehensions and removals under programs such as 297(g), Secure Communities, and its replacement, the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP). In 2012, the U.S. government allocated \$18 billion dollars in funds for immigration enforcement, 24 percent more than the cost of funding the five other U.S. law enforcement agencies combined (Meissner et al. 2013). While the total numbers of deportations (returns and removals) have actually gone down over the last twenty-years, the numbers of removals that negatively affect mixed-status families with several years in the United States have increased (Kanstroom 2014).⁷ The consequences of this national investment in deportation—extended family separation, detention, bans upon applying for visas, severe penalties for repeat unauthorized crossings, interior removals regardless of time spent in the United States, inadmissibility of mitigating circumstances including language and cultural proficiency— “have never been so devastating” (Goodman 2014).

⁵ From 1986 to 2000, Massey also notes that “the number of Mexican exchange students doubled, legal border crossings rose by a factor of 2.5, and the number of tourists grew 5.7 times” (2007: 311).

⁶ These bans negatively affect immigrant youth and their families independent of the conditions of their move to Mexico. A young person who “voluntarily returned” according to the US government can still receive a ban of three to ten years upon applying for a non-immigrant tourist visa at the US embassy in Mexico. I will return to this issue in the final sections.

⁷ Along with programs to facilitate cooperation between local police and US federal immigration agents like 287(g) and Secure Communities (since terminated), this exponential rise in enforcement was also mandated in the “DHS Appropriations Act of 2010” which was the first bill to mandate “a level of not less than 33,400 detention beds.” This quota is being actively contested but currently remains at 34,000 beds under the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016” (“Immigrant Detention Bed Quota Timeline” 2016).

B. Bicultural Immigrant Youth in Mexico

In *El retorno en el nuevo escenario de la migración entre México y Estados Unidos* (2015), published by the National Commission on Population (CONAPO), Luciana Gandini, Francisco Lozano-Ascencio and Selene Gaspar Olvera describe the majority of the returned population as young people of productive and reproductive age. According to their analysis based on national census data in Mexico between 2000 and 2010, the likelihood of return doubled for all undocumented Mexicans in the United States and almost tripled for young men between the ages of 20 and 54. The study highlights a 200 percent increase of return migrants between 2000 and 2010 from 267,150 to **825,609 people**, with the peak years of return between 2006-2009 and evidence of decreasing although still significant numbers through 2013 (60-76).⁸

The *Mexico 2016 Yearbook of Migration and Remittances*, an annual analysis published by Fundación Bancomer and CONAPO, reports over **1.6 million repatriations** to Mexico between 2010 and 2014, around half between the ages of 15 and 29 years old and the majority male. Based on data from the 2014 Mexican National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID), **822,127 Mexican citizens** identified as return migrants between 2010 and 2014 (without registering the year of their return).⁹ The results of this study suggest that the more recent returning population is older than the repatriated population, about half between the ages of 30 and 45 years old (*Mexico 2016 Yearbook of Migration and Remittances*).

These two most recent studies published in Mexico register smaller returning populations than the data published by the Pew Research Center in the November 2015 report, “More Mexicans Leaving than Coming to the U.S.” (Gonzalez-Barrera). Also based on data from the 2014 Mexican National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID), the study identifies **1 million Mexican citizens** as having returned to Mexico between 2009 and 2014. This is in addition to the **1.4 million Mexicans who returned between 2005 and 2010**, as reported in the 2012 Pew Research Center article “Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero” (Passel et al 2012). Of the 1 million who returned since 2009, 720,000 had been residing in the United States as of 2009 and 180,000 were recent migrants who had left and returned in the intervening period. Based on these two studies, rough estimates of the returned population in Mexico currently hover around **two million people**.¹⁰

⁸ While acknowledging the complexity of terms, they define “return” as any immigrant who was in the United States five years previous to the Mexican national census study and who now resides in Mexico, inclusive of all conditions of return (deportation, forced, semi-voluntary, voluntary).

⁹ About half registered their decision to return based on family re-unification, while 15 percent men and 4.5 percent women registered their return as a deportation. A household member fills out the ENADID survey on behalf of other members, so the reasons for return are not necessarily accurate (especially given the stigma around deportation). While the U.S. government registers the number of repatriations instead of repatriated people, the discrepancy is still notably high.

¹⁰ The temporal definition of “return migrant” status ranges from 15 days to multiple years. In my qualitative studies, it is evident that many young people are still “return migrants,” with minimal to partial indicators of integration, six to eight years after arrival in Mexico. For this reason, it is important to combine the population studies of returning citizens. Bicultural immigrant youth who returned or were deported in 2008 are still “return migrants” in terms of their integration process under current conditions.

We do not have broad samples with differentiated statistics about the bicultural and bilingual youth who are now in Mexico. We do know that 27 percent of removed Mexicans had been in the United States for a year or more as of 2010, up from 6 percent in 2005 (Passel et al 2012). We also know that 17 percent were apprehended at work or at home in 2010, compared with 3 percent in 2005 (Passel et al 2012). Between 2009 and 2014, 29.3 percent of repatriated citizens reported speaking English, a total of 468,800 people (*Mexico 2016 Yearbook of Migration and Remittances*). The Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México (EMIF Norte), an excellent study that provides some differentiated information about the population removed by U.S. government officials, registered an average of 8.5 years in the United States for one third of those surveyed in 2012 (Yrizar Barbosa and Alarcón 2015).

By cross-referencing the totals by age with the percentages of those with more than five years in the United States as reported in the “Binational Dialogue on Mexican Migrants in the US and Mexico: Final Report” (Escobar Latapí et al 2013), I conservatively estimate that around **500,000 bilingual, bicultural youth are now living in Mexico** (Anderson and Solis 2014). In general terms, we know that the returning population since 2005 is younger, returns as a part of a family unit, returns under duress, has spent more years in the United States, and is predominately male.

Gandini, Lozano-Ascencio and Gaspar Olvera highlight a key feature of the returned population that has not been adequately represented in all studies to date. The act of return migration must be understood as another displacement in a cycle of displacements, rather than as a temporary visit or a planned conclusion within the immigration cycle (32). The chronological vulnerability associated with life stage in conjunction with structural vulnerabilities—including deportation/forced return and obstacles to insertion into economic and education activity—makes “being young and returned” a particularly challenging combination (Gandini et al 128).

The challenges that immigrant youth face in the aftermath of deportation and return are varied. Emotional distress, post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression and alienation are commonly described as key factors during the first months to years of return. These young people have experienced family separation, a sense of alienation, and human rights violations during detention and deportation. Systemic and inter-personal discrimination against deportees and migrants among the non-migrant population in Mexico can make an already challenging situation more difficult. For some, an accent or a lack of language proficiency in Spanish makes it difficult to “blend in,” find jobs, and continue their studies. In addition to mental, emotional and socio-cultural stress, there are systemic educational, employment and political barriers to local integration and stability, to which I will return in the following section.¹¹

¹¹ With a focus on systemic integration via educational and employment access, this paper does not detail one of the key areas for attention: access to public health services, and in particular, mental health support. As Leticia Calderón Chelius observed in 2012, “it is indispensable that programs, plans, and projects incorporate the [emotional impact of migration] in all areas” (43).

C. U.S. Citizen Children in Mexico

Between 2005 and 2010, the above-cited Pew Research Center Study estimated 300,000 U.S. citizen children and adolescents moved to Mexico (Passel et al 2012). Between 2009 and 2014, the Pew Research Center reports an additional 100,000 U.S. citizen children in Mexico under the age of five (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015). The 2010 National Census in Mexico identified **597,000 U.S.-born children and adolescents living in Mexico** (Jacobo and Espinosa 2015). The first Census of Schools, Teachers, and Students during the 2013-201 school year reports 431,174 foreign students in public and private elementary education, the majority from the United States. This number does not include returning children who have not been able to enter a public school, a challenge that many have faced due to bureaucratic obstacles and discrimination (Jacobo and Espinosa 2015).

U.S. citizen children have been denied entry or given provisional entry to Mexican schools because their families are routinely asked to send away for an international apostille of their U.S. birth certificate. Many young children have also had difficulty revalidating their U.S.-based studies because of the now terminated apostille and translation requirements. Similarly, parents report not being able to enroll their U.S. citizen children in public health services because of their U.S. citizenship status. Within schools, U.S. citizen immigrant youth have reported discrimination and bullying. Due to their English-language proficiency and more limited Spanish skills, schools often do not have the resources to integrate them into classrooms.

Lisa Gisvold, Chief of American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, recently stated for *The Guardian*: “Many of these children have spent most of their lives in the shadows in both the United States and Mexico – first as children of undocumented parents in the United States and later as children who cannot prove their identity and citizenship in Mexico. These binational children should be one of the greatest resources of the next generation” (Lakhani and Jacobo 2016). In an uncanny mirroring of their undocumented peers and siblings, U.S. citizens in Mexico have the right to binational legal recognition, but few resources to claim that right. In turn, it can be very difficult to sustain their potential as bilingual and bicultural citizens once in Mexico.

D. Mexican-born Immigrant Youth with DACA in the United States

Access to educational opportunity via citizenship is one of the fundamental demands of undocumented youth in the United States. The Obama Administration’s executive program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), was a direct response to the civil disobedience, lobbying, and organizing by immigrant youth for educational opportunity and protected status. Those who have applied for DACA have received a two-year work permit and protection from deportation, and many have been able to successfully renew their temporary protected status for another two years.

As of January 2015, 560,941 DACA applications had been accepted for immigrant youth of Mexican origin, in addition to 178,344 renewals (“Biometrics Capture System” USCIS 2015). For these youth, access to education, employment, driver’s licenses and local

mobility, and in select cases, healthcare, has increased, even as many DACA recipients continue to face financial difficulties, discrimination, and vulnerability due to the immigration status of family members. To date, **702,043 immigrant youth of Mexican origin have received DACA protections** (“Biometrics” USCIS 2015).

A number of studies report the predominately positive results of DACA in the lives of immigrant youth. According to a survey of DACA recipients conducted by United We Dream in 2015, a significant portion of DACA recipients surveyed are parents of U.S. citizen children, over 80 percent are employed, and 27.8 percent have completed two-year or four-year post-secondary education (Perez 2015).

DACA renewal has also exposed the inherent risks and vulnerabilities in a temporary protection policy. Ileri Unzueta Carrasco is suing U.S. federal immigration agencies after her DACA renewal was denied on the grounds of “public safety concerns,” alluding to acts of civil disobedience in immigration protests that resulted in arrests but no convictions (Kuang 2016). Several DACA recipients have contacted our network of bicultural immigrant youth via social media to inquire about a possible move to Mexico in the face of family illness or minor infractions registered by local law enforcement such as possession of small amounts of marijuana, drinking under age, and driving with an open container. DACA provides temporary and precarious protection.

The inclusion of advanced parole eligibility for DACA recipients, however, has also created a significant step towards exercising binational mobility and citizenship. Advanced parole has allowed young people to leave the United States with the possibility of a legal return, and many are exercising their long-denied right to visit their families and birth countries from which they have lived in *de facto* exile. Between 2012 and 2014 “over 6,400 DACA recipients requested advance parole. And out of the 4,566 cases decided by that time, only 566 had been denied...an advance parole grant rate of 88 percent” (Goodlatte 2015).¹² Immigrant youth with DACA *and* advanced parole constitute a very small proportion of this generation. While their access to educational opportunity, legal employment opportunities, and international mobility represent a powerful example of positive change, it is the exception to the rule.

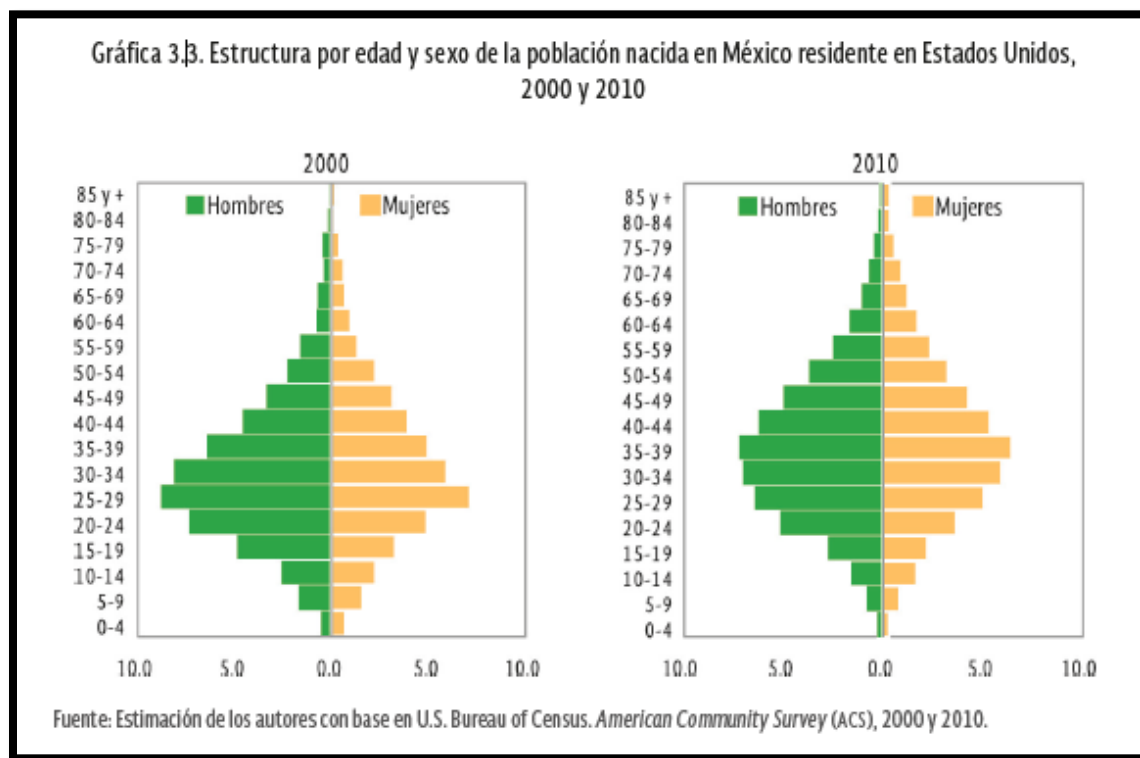
E. Mexican-born Immigrant Youth without DACA in the United States

The majority of bicultural immigrant youth in mixed-status families remain in the shadows in the United States. An estimated 61 percent of unauthorized immigrants under 30 (2.7 million) did not qualify for DACA under any terms as of 2012 (Batalova 2014, Passel and Lopez 2012). In the wake of the non-decision by the U.S. Supreme Court regarding temporary protection under the Obama Administration’s proposals for an expanded DACA

¹² Representative Goodlatte (R-VA) published these numbers in a letter to the Department of Homeland Security that takes issue with “Advanced Parole” because re-entry under “Advanced Parole” ostensibly allows individuals “a pathway to citizenship.” It is not. Rather, the legal re-entry can facilitate an adjustment of immigration status based on the legal options already in place, but without triggering the requirement to leave the country and/or come under an automatic ban for “unlawful presence” as mandated by 1996 IIRIRA law.

and the Differed Action for Parents of Americans program (DAPA), these young people, as well as U.S. citizen children with undocumented parents, continue to negotiate their lives under the constant threat of deportation.

The Migration Policy Institute's analysis of the 402,000 youth who met all but the necessary educational requirements for DACA reflects the above-cited findings about the returning population in Mexico. The defining characteristics of the non-DACA population are: 94 percent from Mexico or Central America, 62 percent male, nearly 75 percent older than 26 but younger than 30, 38 percent with less than a ninth grade education, almost half with low English proficiency, and 72 percent employed with below-poverty wages (Batalova et al 2014).



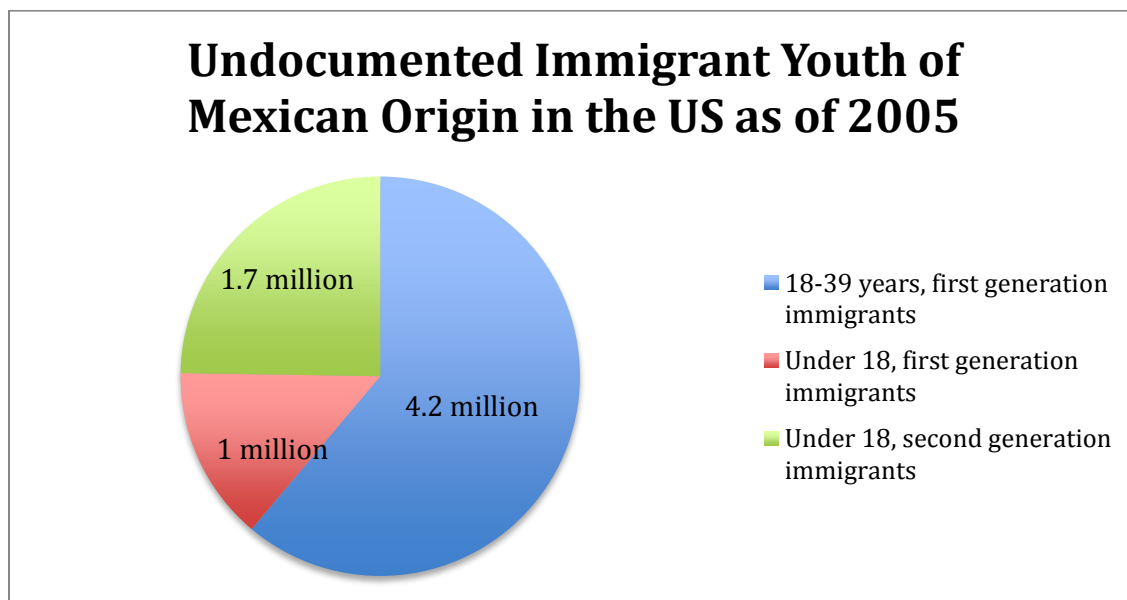
Source: Gandini, Lozano-Ascencio and Gaspar Olvera *El retorno en el nuevo escenario de la migración entre México y Estados Unidos* (2015): 75.

Between 2000 and 2010, the Mexican origin population in the United States drastically shifted to include fewer men between the ages of 18 and 29 years old (Gandini, Lozano-Ascencio and Gaspar Olvera 2015: 75). After accounting for the natural process of aging in the intervening ten years, cross-referencing suggests that a great many of these young men have been deported or returned to Mexico. Young men of Mexican origin, many of them with brown skin and indigenous features, have been targeted by a national and local infrastructure for detention and deportation in the United States that has institutionalized and legalized racial profiling, discrimination, and criminalization.

F. A Juxtaposition of Bicultural Immigrant Youth between 2005 and 2015

Twenty years of escalated immigration enforcement and stalled congressional action have reconfigured the undocumented Mexican-American population of youth and children as a distinctly bicultural one that now lives in conditions of vulnerability, as well as potential, on both sides of the international border.

A statistical snapshot of the undocumented population in the United States in 2005 establishes a useful estimate of the young bicultural population affected by the above-mentioned major shifts in immigration control.¹³



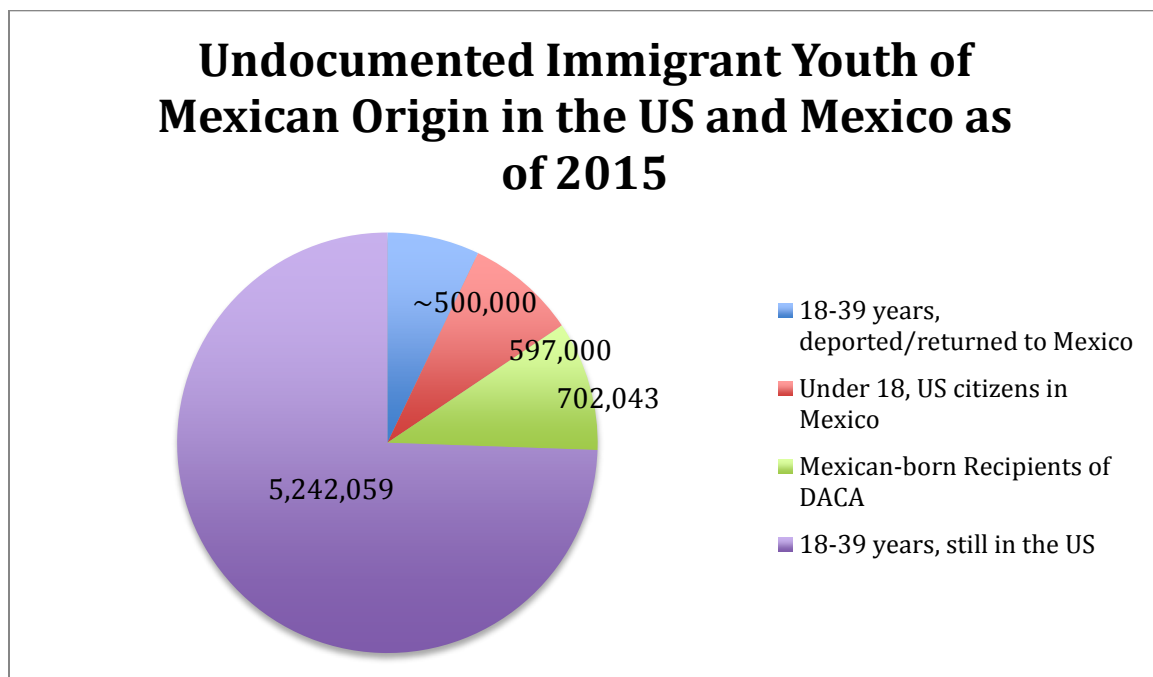
Source: Passel 2005 and Passel, Capps, and Fix 2004, numbers represent the 57% of Mexican-origin immigrants among the total numbers of immigrant youth and young adults. The estimated total of bicultural immigrant youth in the United States as of 2005 comes to 6.9 million.

As of 2005, 7.5 million or 72 percent of the 10.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States were between the ages of 18 and 39 years old. Another 17 percent, an estimated 1.7 million, were under 18 years of age. While we do not have a breakdown by age of the estimated 3.3 million people of Mexican-origin with lawful permanent residency in 2005, a significant proportion of these immigrant youth also faced increasing vulnerability (Rytina 2008). In addition, by 2005 there were well over three million U.S. citizen children born to undocumented parents in the United States (Passel, Capps, and Fix

¹³ 2005 is a significant year in two ways. First, it is the year that allows us to compare and contrast the largest database available regarding return migration to Mexico based on a few key questions in the 2000 and 2010 national census surveys in Mexico. Second, it marks a point in history immediately before the global economic crisis of 2007-2008 that directly and drastically affected the undocumented and lawful permanent resident immigrant population in the United States.

2004). The above chart represents the total Mexican-origin immigrant youth population (6.9 million) growing up in conditions of vulnerability due to their undocumented status or the undocumented status of their parents as of 2005 (excluding the LPR population).

The following chart sketches this same population ten years later. It is based on the above-mentioned mixed sources to demonstrate the new binational distribution of Mexican-origin immigrant youth across the United States *and* Mexico as of 2015. Although immigration status determines where on the pie chart a person falls—on which side of the militarized U.S.-Mexico border they must live—these are members of the same family. Quite literally, they are brothers and sisters, cousins, parents and children. They are former classmates, ex-boyfriends, and neighbors.



Sources: Anderson and Solis 2014, Jacobo and Espinosa 2015, Biometrics” USCIS 2015, Passel 2005, and Passel, Capps, and Fix 2004. I estimate the total of Mexican-born immigrant youth still in the United States as of 2015 by adding the total of those with a different status (1,657,941) and subtracting that number from the estimated number of immigrant youth in the United States in 2005 (6.9 million).

About 10 percent of the undocumented bicultural immigrant youth population has significant although precarious legal protections under DACA. At the other extreme, a little over 15 percent of Mexican-American immigrant youth live in conditions of exile from the United States under automatic bans assigned to them or their caretakers. The majority of undocumented immigrant youth remain in the United States. They live in the legal limbo between the two possibilities of “protected status” and “exile,” but under the constant threat of the latter.

In the following section, I provide a brief overview of the Mexican and U.S. government’s response to bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico. Much less is known about the contexts

of return for bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico in comparison to the social, political, and economic contexts of bicultural immigrant youth in the United States.

IV. Mexico's Current Public Policies for Returning Citizens

Patricia Carolina Ruiz, a young woman who decided to return to her birthplace in Tijuana after her college graduation in 2012, shared the platform with Gabriela in the above-mentioned Regional Conference on Migration forum. It was a rare and significant occasion when the binational connections among this population of young adults was publically recognized and validated. Patricia succinctly summarized her experience upon return, “there is not a dignified, integral, or functional social reinsertion, and there is very little—if any at all—political will to engage with this problem” (Ruiz 205).

The Mexican federal government's response to its returning citizens has almost exclusively emphasized crisis-management during the initial moments and days of return and is characterized by an ad hoc response: re-naming old programs as opposed to re-imagining and adapting them to a decidedly new paradigm. With no differentiated pipeline for integration into Mexico's social services, religious organizations and non-profits have been first-responders for the needs of mixed-status transnational families. Shelters once exclusively dedicated to the support and protection of transmigrants moving through Mexico from Central America and other regions of the world have shifted to include populations of desperate deportees in limbo (Paris Pombo 2010). A handful of state governments have crafted local responses to meet the unprecedented flux of mixed-status families.

In this section, I detail the Mexican federal programs that ostensibly serve bicultural immigrant youth and their families. Then, I highlight three common-sense sectors for the potential integration of bicultural, bilingual, potentially binational citizens: a) education, b) employment, and c) international mobility. While pointing out key examples of local, state and federal efforts to overcome obstacles in each area, I also explore the systemic challenges that any effective public policy must take into account. Over the last four years, I have listened to individual stories of both triumph and loss in the aftermath of deportation and return. The life experiences of those who have overcome discrimination and the lack of an adequate public policy for return to Mexico chart actionable paths to convert systemic vulnerabilities into systemic potential.

A. Mexican Governmental Response: Crisis-Management vs. Integration

Seven federal programs operate in explicit/implicit support of returning and deported citizens, the majority focused on reception during the initial hours and days of return. This response has been particularly inadequate for bicultural, bilingual immigrant youth and children in Mexico, who need a differentiated route across multiple years in order to integrate into Mexico's government programs, public schools and labor markets.

Program	Inauguration	Agencies	Services Provided	Budget
Binational Program for Migrant Education (PROBEM)	1982	Mexican Ministry of Interior (SEGOB), Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP)	Primarily focused on the exchange of teachers between the US and Mexico, limited functionality for returning immigrant youth.	Not available.
Paisano Program	1989	INM with SRE	(Re)integration information limited to a published guide that lists government programs for Mexican citizens. Range of services for Mexican citizens abroad featured in the <i>Guía Paisano</i> , including an emphasis on the consular services available for Mexican citizens abroad.	\$8,881,818 MX in the PEF 2012 (Presupuesto de Egresos de la Federación)* ~\$685,325 USD (Based on exchange rate as of 12/31/12, 12.96 MX:1 USD)
Grupos Beta	1990 (begun as a local border initiative and replaced by federal oversight and budget in 2011)	INM	Emergency rescue and information services.	11,671,402.11 MX in PEF 2012* ~\$900,571 USD (Based on exchange rate as of 12/31/12, 12.96 MX:1 USD)
Program for Repatriation to the Interior of Mexico (PRIM)	2004 under another name: Voluntary Repatriation Program	INM with ICE and OIM	Immediate reception services only. Some intention of follow-up with employment services, but limited impact beyond the point of repatriation.	Not available.
Somos Mexicanos	2008 under another name:	INM with SRE	Immediate reception services at designated	\$11,994,681.12 MX in PEF 2012*

	Humane Repatriation Program (PRH)		border drop-offs. As of July 2016, services will also be provided in consulates abroad.	~\$925,515 USD (Based on exchange rate as of 12/31/12, 12.96 MX:1 USD)
Repatriated at Work	2008	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS), sub-program of the National Employment Service (SNE)	In states along the US-Mexico border (Baja California, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora and Tamaulipas), \$1500 MX to support a job search and \$1500 MX for lodging and food (with distinct but similar arrangements for those who opt to move to their community of origin in a different state).	Not Available.
Support Fund for Migrants (FAM)	2009	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP), with state governments	Results vary across states, very small productive project grants (15-20,000 MX), corroborated observations that much of the funding goes to local infrastructure projects and not returning/deported families, limited to a handful of states not including Chiapas and Michoacán.	300,000,000 MX in PEF 2015, disappears from PEF in 2017** ~\$17,391,304 USD (Based on exchange rate as of 12/31/15, 17.25 MX:1 USD)

Source: *"Proyecto Presupuesto 2014" shared during the third session of the Consejo Ciudadano Instituto Nacional de Migración (CCINM) in October 2013, **"Comparativo PEFs 2007-2016, internal document created by the Colectivo Migraciones para las Américas (COMPA)

The oldest program was established in 1982, when many of the bicultural immigrant youth of today were small children or not yet born. The **Binational Program for Migrant Education (PROBEM)** is out of date and under-funded. The program was designed in 1989 to support the educational trajectories of migrant children, particularly in a context of frequent circular migration for seasonal farm workers. Although under the direction of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), PROBEM operates out of a distinct office from the General Office for Accreditation and Revalidation, which has received the majority of complaints and demands regarding the discriminatory treatment of Mexican-American immigrant youth in Mexico's public schools. PROBEM continues to host teachers'

exchange programs, but there is little evidence of a nation-wide adequate response to returning immigrant youth in elementary and secondary education. There is some evidence of state-level action under PROBEM. For example, in Tijuana, PROBEM works with the state-level Department of Education to provide “Support Groups for Migrant Students” in elementary schools.

The National Migration Institute (INM) administers four out of the seven programs. Since 1989, **Programa Paisano** publishes a guide available in print and online, maintains rest stops along the border and major highways, trains voluntary citizen observers to provide information and advice to travelling families, and includes designated public officials in each state to respond to concerns and complaints. Although in effect throughout the year, three phases of the program operate during the seasons characterized by peak numbers of visiting citizens: Holy Week, summer, and winter. Originally designated to serve migrant families so they could safely travel back and forth between the United States and Mexico, the program now also attempts to serve the returning population.¹⁴

In the most recent publication of the *Guía Paisano* (March 2016), the introduction signals this shift in the program’s purpose: “we have strengthened the Programa Paisano, supporting your arrival to the country, via public transportation or your personal vehicle, and offering you all the protection, orientation, and support you need to visit **or to stay** here, in your homeland” (translation and emphasis by author).¹⁵ In addition to information about forms of official identification, vehicle registration and customs duties, the guide now includes updated information about revalidation of school documents, access to health services, and employment and labor programs. However, indicative of the ad hoc nature of the government response, the website still describes the program as one that serves “Mexicans living abroad that travel through our nation,” a target population that is very distinct from the information and policy pipelines needed for returning and deported families.

The **Grupos Beta** originated as a local initiative in Baja California in 1990 to respond to the risk of violence and extreme desert conditions that immigrants faced along the border zone. Since May 2011, it has been administered by the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) and has extended to include 22 groups in nine states: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Tabasco, Chiapas and Oaxaca. Trained members wear orange vests and circulate along immigration routes with the assignment to protect human rights via rescue, first aid, legal orientation, and information for individuals, independent of nationality or immigration status. Several people I have interviewed since 2012 describe being met at the border by a truck driven by agents in orange vests who gave

¹⁴ Before the increased immigration control and border security measures of the United States, this included many undocumented seasonal workers and families with undocumented members who moved along traditional and informal routes of circular and seasonal migration.

¹⁵ See <http://www.paisano.gob.mx/index.php/programa-paisano/antecedentes> (reviewed June 26, 2016). Review the most recent publication of the *Guía Paisano* via this link: <http://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/61683/GP-SS-2016-Digital.compressed.pdf>.

them a ride to the bus terminal and warned them to get out of the border zone as quickly as possible.

The binational repatriation program, **PRIM (Procedimiento de Repatriación al Interior de México)**, is based in the international airport in Mexico City. It is the result of a bilateral collaboration with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the International Organization of Migration (OIM). Originally established as the Voluntary Repatriation Program in 2004, the updated program now receives U.S. government-sponsored flights of detained deportees. An airplane arrives from Nuevo Otero, New Mexico to Mexico City International Airport on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. After passing through a repatriation point, deportees are expected to seamlessly take advantage of social services already established by the Mexican federal government for non-migrant Mexican citizens even though the requirements for such services often excludes them. Providing information at the in the moment of repatriation can also be counter-productive, as the shock and transition prevents one's ability to take advantage of any thing beyond the most urgent needs.

The PRIM has much in common with the program **Somos Mexicanos**, which has been framed as one of the principal efforts to support the integration of returning citizens. Originally established in 2008 as the Humane Repatriation Program (PHR), Secretary Osorio Chong announced the intent of the program in its inauguration under a new name in 2014: "to extend a hand, to open the doors to their country, and to offer [returning Mexican citizens] the bare minimum, and hopefully much more, so that their return might take place under the best conditions."¹⁶

Until recently, the infrastructure of the Somos Mexicanos program has been limited to designated points of repatriation in Baja California (2), Sonora (2), Chihuahua (2), Coahuila (2), and Tamaulipas (3). Under the jurisdiction of the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM), these designated repatriation points provide: 1.) An INM official document to demonstrate return to Mexico via repatriation/deportation that can be used by Telecomm to receive money transfers up to 9500 pesos (once); 2.) Access to officials from the Secretary of Foreign Relations (SRE) to recover belongings retained by U.S. immigration officials and detention centers, 3.) A box lunch and a backpack (in some cases); 4.) Access to a telephone to make a free phone call; 5.) On-site medical attention; 6.) A published guide (*Guía PRIM* or *Guía Paisano*); and 7.) Transportation to a bus terminal. In some cases along the border, deported citizens receive up to 50 percent discounts on bus tickets to the interior of the country.¹⁷

¹⁶ Full text of speech can be found at this site: <http://www.gob.mx/segob/prensa/mensaje-del-secretario-de-gobernacion-miguel-angel-osorio-chong-durante-la-presentacion-del-programa-somos-mexicanos>

¹⁷ Over several years, the Repatriation Strategy and Policy Executive Coordination Team (RESPECT) have negotiated one of the most significant reforms regarding reception of deported Mexican citizens. In February 2016, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs (SRE), and the Mexican Department of Governance (SEGOB) signed a new agreement to limit the location and time of forced removals. Previous to the recent reform, deportees were indiscriminately dropped off at international bridges and checkpoints in the middle of the night.

Finally, the most recent federal programs are specifically tied to economic (re)integration: **Repatriados Trabajando**, overseen by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS) via the National Employment Service (SNE), and the **Fund for Migrant Support (FAM)**, overseen by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit in collaboration with state governments. Repatriados Trabajando is focused on states along the U.S.-Mexico border (Baja California, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora and Tamaulipas) and offers \$1500 to support a job search and \$1500 MX for lodging and food (with distinct but similar arrangements for those who opt to move to their community of origin in a different state). The program is only open to those who have proof of a removal order (U.S. or Mexican documentation) within the previous fifteen days and provide temporary support and jobs. The Fund for Migrant Support (FAM) offers support for small, productive projects (15-20,000 MX) to returning individuals and groups and is administered by participating state governments. I will describe this program in more detail in my analysis of current contexts and potential for economic integration.

These seven programs fall under the executive mandate of the transversal Special Program on Migration 2014-2018 (Programa Especial de Migración), known as the PEM. The result of a series of dialogues and forums with multiple constituencies, the PEM details five objectives, 26 strategies, 195 action items, and 11 indicators to address issues around migration, immigration, transmigration, and return migration throughout Mexico. Although marked by a lack of implementation and an inadequate budget, Mexican civil society continues to advocate for the implementation of the objectives and actions described by the PEM across presidential administrations and party lines. Objective Four of the PEM prioritizes “assistance in the processes of integration and reintegration of immigrants and their families” via social, cultural, and political integration, educational development, comprehensive health programs, labor insertion, and the recognition of employment rights and guarantees for migrants (“Programa Especial de Migración 2014-2018” 2014).

President Peña Nieto’s Administration has shown a notable lack of interest in engaging and channeling the potential of bicultural immigrant youth once in Mexico. Other than name changes, since 2009, the government has not established any *new* programs that build on the objectives of the PEM and respond to the realities of returning transnational, mixed-status families in Mexico. Within the current programs, substantial efforts have not been made to update the infrastructure, create differentiated routes of access, or increase budgets to meet the needs of the returning population. While there have been modest efforts to support the (re)integration of mixed-status families across Mexico (“Logros 2014”), such efforts have been limited by a lack of dissemination and appropriate scale. Models for successful integration are limited to individual cases, the efforts of civil society organizations, state-level leadership, and a couple of important reforms of national regulatory procedures.

B. Integration via Education

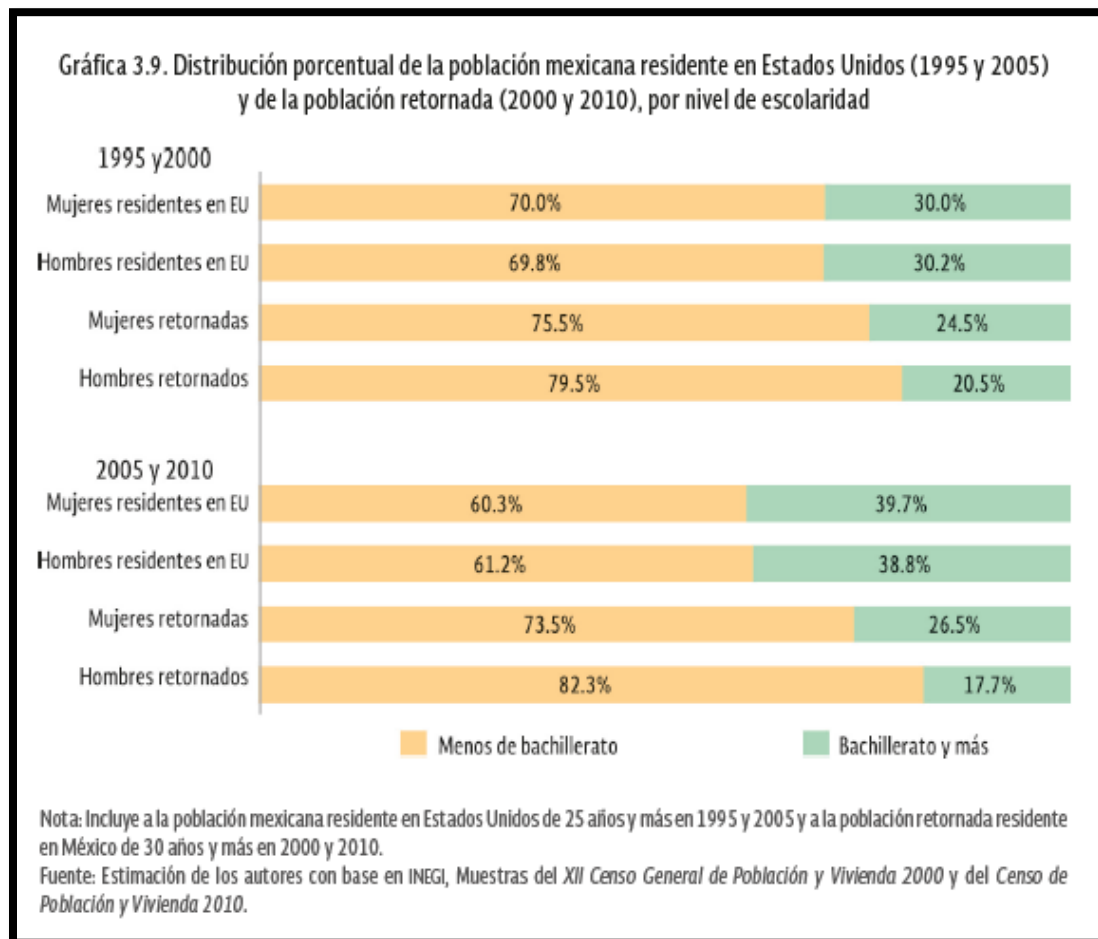
In July 2015, the Ministry of Public Education's (SEP) General Office for Accreditation and Revalidation changed the policy and regulations for the revalidation of elementary and secondary education abroad. Returning families no longer have to send away for an international apostille from the U.S. Secretary of State where the child or adolescent studied. Nor do they have to pay the fees for an official translation of education documents. In an important recognition of the bilingual capabilities within returning communities, families are responsible for their own translations before submitting paperwork for revalidation. A result of years of advocacy by organizations such as IMUMI, Voces Mesoamericanas, Appleseed México, and the Colectivo Migraciones para las Américas, this change in norms promises to facilitate the constitutional right of returning children, U.S. and Mexican-born, to K-12 public education. Denying full inclusion based on the locally misapplied requirement for an international apostille on a U.S. citizen's birth certificate continues.

In spite of a constitutional right to binational citizenship, documenting Mexican citizenship has also been extremely challenging for mixed-status immigrant families. A Mexican birth certificate facilitates binational children's access to education, as well as public health services, once in Mexico. In Oaxaca, hundreds of U.S. citizen children were registered as Mexican citizens by municipal offices (Registro Civil) using false Mexican birth certificates. The state-sponsored Instituto Oaxaqueño de Atención al Migrante, in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy, the BeFoundation, IMUMI, and other institutions, has supported these families in their efforts to nullify the falsely-distributed birth certificates and obtain a valid Mexican birth certificate that recognizes the birth abroad and the right to citizenship via a parent's citizenship status.¹⁸

The implications of the reformed requirements to revalidate K-12 education abroad are not clear for the majority of young adults who arrive in Mexico with middle school and some high school (Gandini et al 2015). They are "early-exiters," as described by education researchers and advocates in the United States. In the book *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* (2015), Roberto G. Gonzalez describes the population of undocumented immigrant youth who do not qualify or who have not applied for DACA in terms that reflect the life experiences of several of the immigrant youth I have interviewed and met in Mexico: "Whether these students exit the school system before high school graduation or fail to make the transition to college, their entry into the world of low-wage work and their early struggles with their legal limitations have consequences for their adult options and their ability to define themselves as included members deserving of rights" (14). Undocumented immigrant youth in the United States have been "culturally integrated but legally excluded" (Gonzalez 6). On the other hand, upon return or in the aftermath of

¹⁸ The Senate of Mexico recently passed a new law to allow Mexican consulates to provide extemporaneous copies of birth certificates to Mexican citizens. Although it is too soon to know how and how well the law will be applied, this reform could help the "doubly undocumented" in the United States, as well as U.S. citizen children of Mexican-born parents who are in the process of returning to Mexico (Senado de la República 2016).

deportation, the majority of bicultural immigrant youth find themselves legally integrated, but culturally and institutionally excluded from their birth country.



Source: Gandini, Lozano-Ascencio and Gaspar Olvera, *El retorno en el nuevo escenario de la migración entre México y Estados Unidos* 2015: 84.

Although we do not have adequate national studies about the numbers of young adults who seek revalidation of their secondary education in the United States in order to complete their high school education in Mexico, we do have qualitative evidence of unnecessary obstacles to their ambitions. Young men like José Luis (in 2013) and Miguel (in 2016) were told that the middle school diplomas they brought from the United States could not be revalidated due to their age, 24 and 25 years old respectively. Both proceeded to study for and take the exams provided by the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) to gain primary and secondary school certifications in Mexico, a process that took them several months. The INEA program was created to serve non-migrant adult populations in rural Mexico, many of them indigenous language speakers. This is one example of many where the returning population is tracked through governmental programs already established for non-returning Mexicans, at great loss and unnecessary expense. Both

Campos and Rodriguez are bilingual and literate with the skills to be working at transnational call centers.

Furthermore, the G.E.D. is not currently accepted as a valid form of educational attainment in Mexico. The closest equivalent exam, the CENEVAL, tests knowledge gained in the materials specified under the requirements for all public preparatory schools. The G.E.D., on the other hand, tests skill sets that are equivalent to but not equal to the skills expected of a high school graduate. Although accepted widely in the United States and Canada, Mexico has yet to accept the G.E.D. or to provide an equivalent exam to its high numbers of “early-exiters” among its young adult and adult population, migrant and non-migrant alike (Nota Informativa, SEP 2016).

For those who return with a high school degree, many of them the first in their families to graduate from high school, the revalidation of U.S.-based studies can still be a costly and time-consuming bureaucratic process through which a name-change, a repeat grade, or the years that have passed since graduation can be the cause for a dismissal of one’s educational history. In addition, there is a lot of misinformation and lack of information about the revalidation process and opportunities to study at the university level. Carlos completed the revalidation process via the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), only to find out upon taking the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) entrance exam that the autonomous, public university has an independent revalidation process.

In order to take the demanding university entrance exams, bicultural immigrant youth often need support with their academic Spanish, Mexican History, and other content. Carlos took the UNAM entrance exam three times. The third time, he and two other bicultural immigrant youth met at all hours and every weekend to study for the exams together. Mexico’s public universities are world-renowned and tuition-free, an excellent option for those who can apply and attend. However, only 30 percent of all Mexican youth have access to a university education (ANUIES 2012). Affiliated preparatory schools (equivalent to high schools) track students into the public universities (national, state, and technical) and a predetermined score on entrance exams grants other students a coveted spot.¹⁹ Furthermore, navigating the higher education system in Mexico can be overwhelming, as each autonomous university establishes independent rules and routes for students with atypical educational backgrounds like those of immigrant youth (Lara 2016).

Returning and deported young adults have also sought out educational opportunity in private universities. Daniel Arenas applied to the Tecnológico de Monterrey from his home in North Carolina during his senior year in high school, a major research university that accepts SAT scores. With scholarship and family support, Daniel graduated and founded the non-profit Dream in Mexico to help others do the same.²⁰ Maggie Loredó overcame the inertia and disappointment of a long revalidation process coupled with discrimination

¹⁹ It is not feasible for undocumented Mexican-born immigrant youth in the United States to return to Mexico to take these entrance exams, which must be taken in person. An option to take the exam in university extension offices in the United States and/or Mexican consulates would facilitate access for bicultural immigrant youth in the United States.

²⁰ See the organization’s website www.dreaminmexico.org to learn more.

and exploitation upon return, and enrolled in a program to study Tourism Administration at the Universidad de Estudios Avanzados in San Luis Potosí. Part of the Red Aliat Universidades, comprised of 9 campuses in 18 states, the university abruptly closed its doors in December 2015 and merged with another university. In a clear case of fraud, committed in a context of impunity, Loreda and her classmates invested a year's time and money into an academic program that was terminated without provisions for continuing their studies, or even recuperating their investment (Loreda 2015). She continues to explore alternatives, including the online degree program offered by UNAM.

Bicultural immigrant youth who have graduated from a university in the United States and have either been deported or made the difficult decision to return to Mexico after their university graduation also face daunting obstacles to study at the Masters or Doctoral level in Mexico. Statistics suggest that more women than men are returning with higher levels of completed education, an estimated 26.5 percent of women who returned in 2010 had a high school degree or higher, in comparison to 17.7 percent of returning men (Gandini et al. 2015: 91). The current regulations for revalidation of a postgraduate degree require the international apostille and official government translations that have been waived for K-12 education, in addition to another bar. For a full revalidation, coursework must be 75 percent equivalent to a similar degree offered by an accredited higher education institution in Mexico. This high standard prevents university graduates, including non-migrant Mexicans who studied abroad, from continuing their studies and employment in the country of their birth. It is a particularly inadequate standard for those who studied in the United States as an undergraduate degree in the Liberal Arts model rarely matches the professional model of a "licenciatura" in Mexico.²¹ The arrival of a critical mass of talented, bicultural, and increasingly bilingual immigrant youth represents an opportunity to actively reverse the "brain drain" of mass emigration in Mexico over the last thirty years with explicit policies for "brain gain" amongst young women and men who are considering return or are already here.

From pre-kindergarten to postgraduate degrees, increasing access to education has an overall positive impact on integration. Immigrant youth who have been able to revalidate their studies and continue their education in Mexico have found new horizons and opportunities. Their stories of integration, while not without challenges, stand out as examples of positive leadership, transnational identity-formation, and tangible contributions to their local economies and communities. The school setting can be a source of discrimination, bullying, and exclusion, but it can also be a resource for information, support, and solidarity.²² For some, education has been a viable, though not guaranteed,

²¹ In March 2015, the General Office of Accreditation, Incorporation, and Revalidation (DGAIR) of the Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP) responded to the demands for dialogue by bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico City with the establishment of a Working Group to address these issues. I participated in this Working Group from March to October 2015.

²² The short documentary film, *Una Vida, Dos Paises* (by Ben Donnellon, Tatyana Kleyn, William Perez and Rafael Vásquez) with accompanying bilingual curriculum for secondary students and a Teacher's Guide for Transborder Students is a wonderful tool for creating such spaces and available for free online at <http://www.unavidathefilm.com>.

path to employment and/or to legal international mobility and family unification via the United States non-immigrant B1/B2 visa.

C. Integration via Employment

Without a network or Mexican-based studies to rely on, finding employment in the formal sector can be challenging in already depressed labor conditions for all Mexican youth. The unemployment rates for returning men and women are higher than their non-migrant peers, despite evidence of more economic activity and efforts to join the labor market on the part of the returning population. For men and women between 25 and 29 years of age, unemployment rates are almost double that of non-migrant Mexican citizens (Gandini et al 112). Furthermore, gender discrimination and immigrant history represents a double disadvantage for returning women wherein unemployment rates increase among those who have high school and university degrees (Gandini et al 115).

Among bilingual, bicultural immigrant youth, transnational call centers have provided an escape valve in Mexican cities where immigrant young adults have found relatively well-paid employment without the barriers they face in other industries: language-proficiency; lack of contacts; discrimination based on immigration history, lack of cultural cues, tattoos; lack of local education or employment histories. Those who have found employment in bilingual call centers have been able to sustain their economic and basic needs much easier than those who have not. Transnational call centers pay more and offer basic benefits that employment in the informal economy does not. However, the labor conditions of outsourced call centers are such that employees usually burn out or are let go within a year to three years, after the temporal limitations on access to reception and integration public services have long passed.

Differentiated access to economic opportunity and stability, with alternatives to transnational call center employment, is urgent. Bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico also tend to gravitate towards employment in English-language education, tourism, international business administration, and digital technologies. In 2015, the U.S.-Mexico Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Embassy initiated the “Training of Bilingual, Bicultural Teachers Program” to match returning “Dreamers” as certified English teachers with the need for English-language instructors in public and private schools (www.usmexicofound.org). Dream in Mexico A.C. has also partnered with DevF to offer scholarships to bicultural immigrant youth in computer programming courses in Mexico City (www.dreaminmexico.org).

The above-mentioned Instituto Oaxaqueño de Atención al Migrante in Oaxaca (IOAM), one of the regions receiving the highest numbers of returning families, has distributed funds in conjunction with the Fondo de Apoyo Migrante (FAM). According to Rufino Domínguez Santos, outgoing director of IOAM, these programs have been the main form of support they have been able to provide. Returning individuals have started bakeries,

carpentry shops, fruit tree businesses, flowers, and small family farms.²³ In a comment repeated by several other immigrant advocates, Dominguez Santos observed that the funding is small compared to the need, and that the current distribution of FAM resources to infrastructure projects has limited the ability of the program to directly support returning and deported families.

Dominguez Santos also observed that bilingual or multilingual youth (many immigrant youth from indigenous communities speak some level of English, Spanish, and an indigenous language) who grew up in the United States have not taken advantage of the FAM program in his area. His rough estimates suggest that in each community of around 200 inhabitants, there are up to 10-20 young people who had spent formative years in the United States. They suffer discrimination in their communities because of the way they dress, their tattoos, and their linguistic abilities.

In Mexico City, the Secretary for Rural Development and Equality for Communities (SEDEREC) administers the FAM funding to returning citizens.²⁴ The CDMX Secretary of Employment and Development of Employment Opportunity (STyFE) has also established a unique program to facilitate applications for unemployment insurance. Applicants must have returned after January 1, 2013 and can apply with a consular ID, deportation order, a reception certificate for repatriated citizens admitted by the INM, or a letter vouching for return status from SEDEREC. They must also have an ID, a CURP, and a proof of address. Returnees since 2013 can receive up to six months of a monthly minimum wage. This program stands out as an example that offers appropriately differentiated access to an already-existing government program.

Finally, the stigma of criminalization tied to deportation makes it especially difficult for young adults and family members to find employment and has resulted in cases of discrimination, both systemic and interpersonal, as well as accounts of being targeted by police and organized crime. Ethnographic data as well as several long-term studies by the Transaction Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) of Syracuse University have called into question the seemingly simple connection between criminality and deportation. Over half of all removal orders are tied to traffic or immigration violations, both misdemeanors under the U.S. legal code.

Even the “convicted criminals” of more serious crimes, as noted in statistical studies, do not fit stereotypical assumptions about gang- and drug-related convictions. These young people are now living in Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Sonora, and other towns and cities across Mexico. Javier was arrested after a particularly violent fistfight outside of his childhood home in Los Angeles. He served almost a year in county jails while fighting his case with his mother’s support. Upon sentencing, he was immediately detained and deported in handcuffs. In Mexico City, he is now working full-time at a transnational call center, and supporting his two small children. He is the only

²³ In addition to the FAM program, the IOMA has also initiated a program to train FAM recipients in small business skills. They have also supported projects to improve the housing for returning families, with an emphasis on sustainable building techniques.

²⁴ In 2011, SEDEREC, along with civil society organizations across Mexico, had to organize a public forum to insist on the original budget of 300 million MX that was approved in 2008, but not authorized until 2012.

member of his immediate family in Mexico. Young men like him live in a state of precarious potential. Many are looking for legitimate employment to support binational families and seeking out educational opportunities, actively avoiding what many recognize as the death sentence of drug-related and organized crime in Mexico. However, as Yoni Salgado remarked in 2013, “those are the most open doors anywhere, the easiest option is the mafia. But doors over here, like the government, they shut those on you” (Salgado 159).

While recent years have seen some modifications to suggest a growing awareness of the unsustainability of an over-active deportation regime in self-processed democracies, official sources in the U.S. and Mexican government continue to emphasize a direct connection between deportations and criminal convictions. For example, on page 12 of the current publication of the *Guía Paisano*, a guide published by the National Immigration Institute (INM), Mexican citizens can still read, “In general, deportations focus on people with criminal records, immigration records, or those that are considered a risk to public security” (translation by author, *Guía Paisano* 2016).²⁵

In the context of Mexican emigration, employment and economic stability have been key factors for generations. In many rural communities across Mexico, bicultural immigrant youth are asking what there is to integrate into? It is difficult to build pathways for integration when the same conditions that forced their parents to leave home and move to the United States continue. Several of the immigrant youth who have been able to start their own businesses or find stable, relatively well-paid jobs speak of an elusive “Mexican Dream” that contrasts to the failed “American Dream” they left behind (Anderson and Solis 2014). For some, employment has been also a viable, though not guaranteed, path to legal international mobility and family unification via the B1/B2 visa.

D. International Mobility via Integration

The B1/B2 visa is a non-immigrant visa that all Mexican nationals (without binational status) must apply for in order to enter the United States for 90 days or less. The B1 visa is for temporary travel for business purposes and the B2 visa for tourism, pleasure or visiting. The visas are often issued jointly for a time period of ten years. In order to apply, a Mexican citizen must fill out online form DS-160 and upload a personal photo. He or she can then schedule an interview at the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate in Mexico. Before going to the interview, a \$160 (~\$3,176 MX based on exchange rate as of 9/27/16, 19.85 MX: 1 USD) fee must be paid and digital fingerprints must be submitted in a separate appointment. The main requirement for the visa is proof of stable and ongoing reasons to stay in Mexico, primarily economic.

Being completely honest and forthcoming about one’s immigration history is highly recommended, and often unavoidable. Bicultural immigrant youth often have passports emitted by the Mexican consulate near their childhood home. Their education and employment histories, as well as their family ties, are deeply binational. They speak fluent English in their interviews. All studies, qualitative and quantitative, have agreed upon the

²⁵ The original reads: “En general, las deportaciones se enfocan en personas con antecedentes penales, migratorios o que se consideren de riesgo para la seguridad pública.”

increasing interest among returned and deported immigrants to find legal pathways home to their families (the reasons are complex but include the dangers and high cost of unauthorized migration, as well as the severe penalties for repeat immigration violations under U.S. law). A significant proportion of immigrant youth I have met are no longer interested in living in the United States, but desperately yearn for a temporary non-immigrant visa in order to go on business, education, and family-related visits to the United States.

Immigrant youth who have been deported under a U.S. government removal are almost always aware of bans that prevent them from obtaining a non-immigrant visa, but many of those who signed a voluntary departure order, under a lack of information provided by ICE agents while in detention, learn of the ten-year ban for “unlawful presence” when they present themselves at the U.S. Embassy for a non-immigrant visa. There is an erroneous perception that a removal order comes with a ban, and voluntary departure orders do not. Perhaps even more surprisingly, bicultural immigrant youth who voluntarily returned to Mexico also run the risk of receiving a ban as a result of asking for a non-immigrant visa. Under the 1996 IIRIRA law, any determination of “unlawful presence”—independent of deportation history—can result in a ban at the discretion of the embassy officer on a case-by-case basis. Just as there are extremely limited paths to citizenship for members of mixed-status families in the United States and Mexico, there are also very limited legal, safe pathways for binational business-related travel, educational opportunity, and reunification of families.

In October 2013, Enrique Rojas applied for a B1/B2 visa after having graduated from a preparatory school in Morelos, Mexico. He was honest about the time he had spent in the United States, from his 12th to his 24th birthday, and about his decision to return voluntarily. However, his application was denied and he was informed of an automatic ten-year ban. The embassy officer suggested that once he got a job, the outcome might be different. After graduating from the university with a degree in engineering and upon acceptance for a job at a transnational company that requires travel to the United States, Enrique re-applied in 2016. His application was denied again based on a ban that had been applied in 2013. Although he needs to travel to the United States for his job, and his mother is ailing, he is currently banned from even visiting through the year 2021.²⁶

Given the risks of applying, it is startling that many young men and women have been granted a B1/B2 visa in spite of “unlawful presence” (some without a waiver), and based upon their successful integration in Mexico (as defined by the U.S. Embassy). The arbitrary application of denials and bans, as in the case of Enrique Rojas, suggests that there are less than transparent criteria being used by the U.S. Embassy for the granting of non-immigrant visas. The stories of those who have been able to travel with a B1/B2 visa have borne witness to me, again and again, of the profound healing, as well as increased opportunities, that accompany legal, binational mobility for our bilingual, bicultural immigrant youth.

²⁶ Applicants can apply for a waiver based on extreme hardship to a US citizen or permanent resident relative (not a child). The waiver costs \$580 USD (~\$11,513 MX based on exchange rate as of 9/27/16, 19.85 MX: 1 USD) and requires the support of a legal professional.

Bicultural and bilingual immigrant youth are moving towards binational citizenship (a concept that is increasingly distinct from dual nationality) in small but significant numbers. Three emergent subpopulations now have limited but legal access to international mobility: immigrant youth who have been granted and/or are eligible for B1/B2 visas, U.S. citizen immigrant youth who have been recognized as dual nationals or are eligible for dual citizenship, and immigrant youth with DACA who have been able to travel with Advanced Parole.

V. Immigrant Rights as Transnational Rights

What if we begin to reframe the struggle for immigrant rights as a struggle for trans/binational rights? What if we articulate public policies that do not divide and differentiate based upon authorized/unauthorized immigration status, but instead establish new indicators and legal frameworks that *grow and protect* the already substantial population of transnational families living on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border? What if we can see the health of immigrant youth across the Americas as a fundamental part of a safer and more stable future, as opposed to as perpetual menace? What would it take to recognize and invest in robust binational citizenship for our immigrant youth across the region?

There is much that can be built upon structures and discourses that are already in place. For Mexican-American immigrant youth in the United States, the Mexican Foreign Ministry (SRE) has become an increasingly visible and active resource in their evolving negotiations with binationality and citizenship (on paper and as practiced). The Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) is an important ally of Mexican-origin immigrant youth in the United States. Although Mexicans comprise 65 percent of the eligible population for DACA, they represent 77 percent of successful applicants. A major contributor to this success rate is the institutional investment of Mexico's consulates, "providing official documents for Mexican nationals; conducting outreach and partnering with advocates, community-based organizations, and legal service providers; and contributing funds to offset the costs of legal services and application fees" (Singer, Prchal Svajlenka, and Wilson 2015).

In addition to DACA workshops and advocacy, IME also supports immigrant youth with **IME Becas**. Established in 2005 under more modest terms, the program currently offers scholarships to offset the costs of university tuition and labor certification programs for undocumented and DACA students in the United States. With a budget of \$40 million MX in 2014 (~2.7 million USD based on exchange rate as of 12/31/14, 14.74 MX: 1 USD), IME Becas has made a substantial difference in an estimated 60,000 students' lives between 2005 and 2016, and has fostered a closer relationship between Mexican immigrant youth abroad and their Mexican consulate (Délano 2016).

IME has also invested in the above-mentioned opportunity for advanced parole for immigrant youth with DACA by co-sponsoring several delegations to Mexico. Launched in 2015, under the **Dreamers Without Borders** program in collaboration with the U.S.-

Mexico Foundation (USMF) and the Latino Center for Leadership Development, several delegations of immigrant youth leaders have come to Mexico on sponsored visits that include trips to historical and cultural sites; coordinated meetings with business, government and civic leaders; and coursework on Mexico's social, political, and economic landscape. The explicit intention of the program is to "build new bridges of understanding and cooperation" between the two countries (www.usmexicofound.org).

"Dreamers Without Borders" includes the intention to "connect Dreamers across borders" wherein "visiting Dreamers meet with returned Dreamers who now live in Mexico, offering the two groups the unique opportunity to learn about the similarities and differences of the challenges they face in both countries and to share their strategies for overcoming these obstacles" (www.usmexicofound.org). Past delegations of immigrant youth leaders have insisted on dialogue and connection with their returning and deported peers. However, the program has been unable to establish a functional venue for such a dialogue, in large part due to the Mexican government's inability to respond to vocal demands by deported and returning youth for educational, employment, and public health access in Mexico. Returning and deported immigrant youth are asking why there is not an equivalent level of investment and coordination on behalf of their leadership, integration, and access to education and employment in the aftermath of return/deportation (Landa 2015).

It is a question that begs asking. The Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) was established in 2003 as the Mexican government "became more actively involved in promoting migrants' political participation in Mexico, empowering community leaders to promote the Mexican migrant's agenda both in their home country and in the United States, and expanding services available for migrants in the United States" (Délano 2011: 199). As hundreds of thousands among the Mexican diaspora have returned home, often under duress, the official commitment to actively support the well-being and integration of Mexican citizens abroad has come under scrutiny.

Until July 2016, the Foreign Ministry's interventions on behalf of returning mixed-status families have been limited to information services and campaigns in Mexican consulates. Consulates distribute copies of the *Guía Paisano*, and on a needs-based basis have provided support in obtaining documents and accurate information for individuals and families planning a return. In the process of writing this working paper, a new collaboration between SEGOB and SRE was announced. Under the above-mentioned **Somos Mexicanos** program, this new agreement incorporates SRE's "binational reach" that includes "50 consulates in the United States, in addition to 45 offices across Mexico" into the Mexican government's efforts to provide integration and access for returning citizens (Comunicado Conjunto SEGOB-SRE 2016). It is too soon to tell whether this program will have a positive and tangible effect, but the agreement is promising.

The Ministry of Foreign Relations is powerfully positioned to have a positive impact on bicultural immigrant youth in Mexico, just as they are doing for Mexican-American "Dreamers" in the United States. In the United States, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed innovative educational, cultural, financial, public health, and leadership initiatives in collaboration with local immigrants and local institutions. Why not replicate this model in collaboration with Mexican civil society, Mexican schools, and most

importantly, returning and deported Mexicans themselves?²⁷ The Mexican government can build on the constructive and successful models of policy design, programming and implementation within the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) amongst Mexican immigrants in the United States over the last twenty years. By replicating initiatives first taken abroad, the 45 SRE delegation offices across Mexico that are primarily dedicated to passport services might begin to collaborate with returning immigrant families and local institutions to include services that also support integration via legal identity, education, employment, public health, and cultural activities.

Dual nationality in both national contexts is commonly associated with access to two specific rights exclusively tied to legal citizenship: the right to vote and to international mobility via a passport. However, in addition to voting power and passports, the more quotidian rights and responsibilities of binational citizenship—in both its legal/political and socio-cultural manifestations—have taken on a new urgency for those who have moved to Mexico, as well as undocumented immigrant youth living under the threat of deportation in the United States. Even if the numbers of deported Mexican families continue to diminish, the consequences for immigrant families are long-term. In the lives of a ten-year old bicultural child in the United States or a twenty-two year old bicultural young adult in Mexico, the aftermath of return and deportation in the family will unfold over the course of their lifetimes.

In two countries whose relations have been dominated by a history of U.S.-led aggression, mutual perceptions of mistrust, and antagonistic racial and nationalist discourses, trans/binational citizenship is still often treated as unilateral political/academic discourse, abstract hypothetical theory, or dangerous taboo. We have yet to develop the vocabulary and demographic instruments necessary to see and hear our bicultural, potentially binational, population in its rich diversity.

To begin, we must develop better indicators and instruments for measuring, designing, and evaluating public policy articulated for and by bicultural immigrant youth and transnational, mixed-status families. Doing so would be more effective and less costly than building a wall between our two countries. The two governments must authorize a binational commission of government actors, civil society leaders, academics, and members of transnational mixed-status immigrant families to take on such a creative, urgent and ambitious task. As Rodolfo Córdova Alcaraz demonstrates in the report, “Transformar construyendo: dos años de Presidencia del Consejo Ciudadano del Instituto Nacional de Migración,” citizen and immigrant participation in the formation of public policies can have a positive impact on the viability, dissemination, and human rights focus of public policies (2015). Furthermore, a public policy platform invested in the transition from immigrant citizens to binational citizens will include indicators differentiated by age, gender, race, and identity (indigenous, multiple) around areas such as education,

²⁷ For example, the Mexican government’s efforts to establish a viable consular ID, or the “matrícula consular” in the United States involved lobbying of “financial institutions, cities, counties, and police departments to validate it” in the United States (Délano 2011). The same effort was not made among Mexican financial institutions, cities, counties, and police departments, and although it is legally recognized in Mexico, returning immigrants often complain that their matrícula consular is not accepted as a valid form of ID upon return.

bilingualism, economic stability, public health access, international mobility, and family unification.

We must learn more about binational rights and responsibilities around the world. For those of us who have legal binational recognition, we must seek to exercise those rights and responsibilities while insisting on a more inclusive platform for others to do so.²⁸ Policies that establish and protect international movement as well as transnational citizenship often do so within a framework of worldwide racial and economic apartheid (Nevins and Aizeki 2008 as quoted in Golash-Boza 2015). Support for maintaining and deepening bilingual and bicultural identity is also key. Integration through education instead of criminalization is fundamental.

We must prioritize transnational mixed-status family systems in their myriad manifestations, including LBGTQ and other non-traditional families, in public policy analysis for immigrants and immigrant youth. Immigrant youth are binational, because their families are binational. While many immigrant activists, transnational immigrant clubs, civil society organizations, and researchers have begun to place transnational immigrant families at the center of their advocacy work, government policy-makers across the region have yet to make the leap.

Furthermore, policy reforms must recognize that mixed-status Mexican families are not moving (nor aspiring to move) unilaterally north, and that many are seeking out stability and opportunity in Mexico as well as the United States (Gonzalez Barrera 2015). We must expand the limited but real opportunities for legal international mobility, thinking in terms of circular migration and multi-direction migration flows (including beyond the Americas and back). The movements of this young population are not unidirectional, nor unilateral (if they ever have been). The realities of their families are even less so.

Across the course of this bicultural and bilingual generation's lives, the common sensation of being "ni de aquí, ni de allá" (neither from here, nor from there) has been codified into law and then broadly, if unevenly, interpreted and enforced via well-funded policies, predominately by the United States. Ongoing transnational public policies that criminalize immigration have contributed to increased disparities and extreme vulnerabilities across and within national populations. In order to move forward with public policies that address, instead of exacerbate, such disparities we must begin to reconfigure the geographical and temporal scale of the challenge. By re-framing the debate over immigration as a broader conversation about the constellation of public policy reforms needed to govern transnational movement and citizenship in the twenty-first century, we can better articulate just what is at stake in a major historical shift that has only begun.

²⁸ There are very few studies on the numbers of potential as well as legally-recognized binational citizens. However, in our increasingly globalized and inter-connected world, many more of us already live in this uncertain, varied, but state-recognized terrain. In the United States, 33.7 million people of Mexican origin live in the United States. As of 2012, 11.4 million were recent immigrants, and 22.3 million were born in the United States and claim Mexican origin (half with at least one immigrant parent). The median age of the Mexican-origin population in the United States is 25 years old (Gonzalez-Barrera and Lopez 2013). In Mexico, the 2010 Census calculated 876,528 U.S. citizens living in Mexico while the U.S. embassy estimates about a million, including semi-permanent residents who split their time between both countries.

VI. Specific Recommendations

In the interest of constructing a binational agenda that privileges the human security and socio-economic integration of immigrant youth in the United States *and* Mexico in the short- and long-term, I propose a non-exhaustive list of recommendations.

Binational

- Instead of the infamous “wall” touted during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election cycle, the U.S. and Mexican governments must collaborate on a multi-year binational commission of government actors, civil society leaders, academics, *and* members of transnational mixed-status immigrant families to produce a broad quantitative study of transnational families using differentiated indicators such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, language(s), self-proscribed identity, immigration status, educational aspirations, and public health.
- End the Frontera Sur program and the laws, policies, and budgets that criminalize immigrants, and especially immigrant youth, from Mexico, Central America, and countries around the globe.
- Establish a robust transnational program that divests in militarization and invests in educational opportunities at all levels (basic, secondary, technical, and university) for immigrant youth in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

United States

- End for-profit detention, the detention of families and children, collaboration between local police forces and U.S. federal immigration agents, and racial profiling/criminalization of black and brown immigrants.
- Build a revitalized platform for a 21st century overhaul of the U.S. immigration system that embraces transnational mobility and transnational citizenship as an element of human security and that privileges family re-unification.
- Repeal the automatic bans for “unlawful presence” and expanded deportation measures mandated by the 1996 IIRIRA law with clear provisions for retroactively repealing unjust bans and reuniting families.
- Strengthen the transparency and non-discriminatory practices in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico regarding the decisions for B1/B2 visas. Adopt explicit policies for B1/B2 visas that support rather than discriminate against binational mobility for locally-integrated bilingual and bicultural immigrants and their families.
- Discontinue the increasingly unpopular policies to establish international trade deals that privatize natural resources (farming land, water, forests, fossil fuels), privilege the interests of transnational companies over citizens, and undermine the health of local economies that contribute to forced immigration, precarious conditions of return.

Mexico

- Build on the positive experiences and models of the SRE and the IME in the United States to replicate initiatives in collaboration with local return immigrant families and local institutions via the 45 SRE delegation offices in Mexico under the newly announced program “Somos Mexicanos.”
- Expand or create a parallel IME Becas program for returned and deported “Dreamers” in Mexico who have the opportunity to study for a higher education degree or labor certification in Mexico.
- Re-establish and increase the funds in Mexico’s 2017 Budget for Federal Expenditures (PEF) beyond the 300 million pesos MX currently approved for the Fund for Migrant Support (FAM), and reform the regulations so that all 32 states can access the funds regardless of remittance totals.
- Re-define the priorities and programs of PROBEM (and/or create a new program), with the necessary funding, to support state-led initiatives in elementary, secondary, and preparatory education in local efforts to integrate returning immigrant youth via linguistic support, anti-discrimination programs, and intercultural safe spaces.
- Launch a nation-wide program to educate, train and employ immigrant youth with native and near-native English capabilities to teach English and coordinate programs in the nation’s public schools. Facilitate access to the program via revalidation and certification of U.S.-based skills, scholarships to study at the preparatory and university levels, and positions with full labor benefits under the Ministry of Public Education’s (SEP) hiring processes.
- Facilitate the process to obtain a high school degree in Mexico by accepting the G.E.D. for revalidation and/or creating an equivalent exam that tests skills (as opposed to content) for young adults over 21 years of age.
- Facilitate the taking of entrance exams for public universities (UNAM, Politécnico, etc.) in Mexican consulates for Mexican-born immigrant youth in the United States interested in returning to Mexico to study.
- Reform the laws and regulations that mandate a 75 percent equivalency of a university degree for the revalidation of undergraduate and graduate degrees in Mexico to invite rather than discourage accreditation of foreign-earned degrees.

Glossary of Acronyms for U.S. and Mexican Government Institutions

Antiterrorism and Effective Penalty Death Act (AEDPA)

Binational Program for Migrant Education (PROBEM)

CDMX Secretary of Employment and Development of Employment Opportunity (STyFE)

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA)

Fund for Migrant Support (FAM)

General Educational Development (GED)

Human Repatriation Program (PHR)

Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA)

Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME)

International Organization for Migration (OIM)

Legal Permanent Resident (LPR)

Mexican Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB)

Mexican Ministry of Public Education (SEP)

Mexican National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE)

Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS)

National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

National Commission on Population (CONAPO)

National Institute for Adult Education (INEA)

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Oaxacan Institute for Migrants in Oaxaca (IOAM)

Priority Enforcement Program (PEP)

Programa Especial de Migración (PEM)

Program for Repatriation to the Interior of Mexico (PRIM)

Secretary for Rural Development and Equality for Communities (SEDEREC)

Survey on Migration in the Northern Border of Mexico (EMIF Norte)

Transaction Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC)

The National Center for the Evaluation of Higher (CENEVAL)

The National Migration Institute (INM)

Unique Population Register Code (CURP)

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

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