

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: “DOING RESEARCH HELPS!”:
NEWCOMER LATINX HIGH SCHOOLERS’
RESEARCH & WRITING CONCEPTIONS

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Drawing on critical pedagogy and sociocultural theories (SCT) of learning and literacy, this dissertation explored the relationship between recently arrived (or *newcomer*) Latinx immigrant students’ writing conceptions and their involvement in an afterschool program based on participatory action research (PAR). The study had a “two-tiered design” (Brown, 2010). In the first tier, a group of immigrant high schoolers (n = 15) and I worked together, as coresearchers, in PAR projects focused on students’ and teachers’ experiences at a newcomer school. Simultaneously, I conducted a qualitative critical inquiry on the writing conceptions and PAR experiences of four focal, Latinx, newcomer, youth coresearchers. The critical inquiry constituted the second study tier and the primary focus of my dissertation. For my dissertation study, I collected data from participant observation of the program sessions, literacy artifacts, and two rounds of

semi-structured interviews with the focal newcomer Latinx high schoolers (NLHSs) and with two teachers who were familiar with the focal students' writing. I analyzed the collected data inductively and deductively (Creswell, 2014).

The study resulted in three main findings. First, the focal youth perceived PAR as an opportunity for conscientization and for challenging dialogue. Second, through the PAR process, the focal youth shifted from conceiving writing as a reproductive activity to view it as a tool for personal and social transformation. Third, the PAR process influenced the youth's writing conceptions by being youth-centered, offering novel writing opportunities, and promoting dialogic talks. My research findings indicate that NLHSs' conceptions of writing and research are tied to their learning experiences in their home countries and in the US. Their conceptions are therefore different from those of non-immigrant students.

My investigation makes important contributions to educational theory, research, and practice. It demonstrates the effectiveness of employing both SCT and critical pedagogy (as a composite theoretical lens) to examine students' conceptions of writing and research. It highlights the importance of studying NLHSs' unique learning experiences and perspectives. It details research-based practices that help immigrant students develop their writing and facilitate their adaptation to a new country.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Currently, Latinx immigrants constitute 50.4% of the U.S. immigrant foreign-born² population (Radford, 2019). The Latinx population has increased not only in *traditional-destination states* (e.g., California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois), where Latinxs historically resided, but also in *new-destination states* (e.g., North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Maryland), where the Latinx population has begun to settle and grow since the 1990s (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2012; Marrow, 2011, 2017; Terrazas, 2011; Vásquez, Seales, & Marquardt, 2008). The Latinx immigrant population has augmented and become vital in many US regions.

Although most of the Latinx immigrants are from Mexico, a growing portion of these immigrants come from the *Northern Triangle countries*—i.e., El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). Indeed, the immigrant population from the Northern Triangle residing in the US has increased more than tenfold, over 1,350 percent, from 1980 to 2017 (O'Connor, Batalova, & Bolter, 2019). People from the Northern Triangle migrate to the US for a variety of reasons, including poverty, violence, and political instability in their home countries and/or their desire to reunite with family members who live in the US (National Immigration Forum, 2019).

² According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the foreign-born population is composed of anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. The native-born population is integrated by those who are U.S. citizens at birth, including people born in the United States mainland or in its territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) as well as those born in other countries but whose parents are U.S. citizens.

Many recent immigrants from the Northern Triangle are children and youth who enroll in US public schools and who need special support to adjust to their new lives in the US (Collazo, 2009; Rosenblum & Ball, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). These children and youth often face traumatic experiences (e.g., domestic violence and family separation), before and during migration and resettlement, that may hinder their optimal adaptation to US schools (Perreira & Ornelas, 2013; Rosenblum & Ball, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). The adjustment process can be particularly challenging for newcomers who migrate to the US during their teenager years because, compared to younger newcomers, the teenagers are more likely to experience acute identity crisis, lack of language learning support, interrupted or limited education, and interpersonal conflicts (Allard, 2013; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). However, scholars in the US have paid scant attention to the educational experiences of recent immigrant teenager students from Latin America in general and from the Northern Triangle in particular. To address this knowledge gap, the present study focused on understanding the learning experiences of a group of high schoolers who had recently migrated to the US from various Latin American countries (mainly, from El Salvador and Honduras).

My study unfolded in a public high school that only serves students who are learning English as an additional language (i.e., *English language learners, ELLs*³) and/or who have immigrated to the U.S. over the last four years (i.e., *newcomer students*).

³ For the sake of fidelity, I employ the terms used in the original publications. When a reviewed publication used the term *English language learners* (ELLs) to designate students who speak a language other than English at home and who are learning English the students ELLs, I use the term ELLs too. However, I prefer to call these learners *emergent bilinguals* (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008), as to emphasize that the students are not just acquiring English but adding a language (English) to their extant linguistic repertoire. For that reason, I utilize the term emergent bilinguals (EBs) or emergent multilinguals (EMs) whenever I am talking about my research or study participants.

This “newcomer school” (Boyson & Short, 2003; Short & Boyson, 2012) is part of the *Internationals Network for Public Schools*, an educational nonprofit that provides economic resources and professional support to high schools and academies devoted to newcomer students. The International’s educational approach centers on five core principles:

1. *heterogeneity and collaboration* (i.e., classes and student groups are mixed according to age, grade, academic ability, prior schooling, native language, and linguistic proficiency),
2. *experiential learning* (i.e., learning by doing/engaging in real-life activities),
3. *language and content integration* (i.e., English language and subject knowledge are learned and taught concurrently),
4. *localized autonomy and responsibility* (i.e., all the members of school personnel and student body are considered autonomous and are allowed to make important decisions, such as preferred teaching-learning activities and hiring new faculty), and
5. *one learning model for all*, meaning that every student has access to the same interdisciplinary, rigorous curriculum and pedagogical approach (Internationals Network, 2018).

Overall, the Internationals’ approach seems to work well for immigrant students. Unlike other public schools, the International High Schools often recognize immigrant students’ cultural assets, promote positive student-teacher relations, and establish an institutional culture focused on preparing immigrant youth for college (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011; Straubhaar, 2013). These features help newcomer students obtain the

socioemotional support and develop the academic skills they need to thrive in and beyond high school (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011). However, researchers have not thoroughly examined how specific groups of newcomer students (e.g., Latinx newcomer youth) develop important skills and practices, such as writing, in schools belonging to Internationals Network for Public Schools and other newcomer schools.

In fact, although national and state standards require public schools (including the Internationals' newcomer schools) to support *all* students in developing specific writing skills, there is limited research on how educators and students are conceiving and engaging with writing in schools. For instance, the Common Core State Standards—adopted in 46 US states (Olson, Scarcella, & Matuchniak, 2015)—expect high school students to “write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 18). As states and school districts implement the standards and associated tests, school teachers may feel compelled to focus on teaching test-taking techniques and the mandated English writing skills (Enright & Gilliland, 2011; Gilliland, 2015). The educators may therefore ask students to compose short, English-only texts that meet the requirements of high-stakes tests, instead of guiding students on how to use writing to accomplish broader personal or social purposes, such as improving their life conditions (Enright & Gilliland, 2011; Gilliland, 2015). As a result, some students may come to view writing as irrelevant or uninteresting and may not fully engage in writing activities and processes (Danzak, 2015; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007).

Research on how newcomer Latinx high schoolers (NLHSs) conceive and engage with writing is particularly scarce. Thus far, most of the studies involving NLHSs' writing (e.g., Gilliland, 2015; McCloud, 2015; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) have occurred at traditional high schools. These studies (e.g., Rubinstein, 2007; Villalva, 2006) suggest that conceptions of writing may vary among NLHSs: Whereas some NLHSs may consider writing as a teacher-mandated, repetitive task, others may come conceive writing as a liberatory experience or a transformational tool. Their conceptions of writing, in turn, may shape how they engage with writing (Mateos & Solé, 2012).

Research on NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement at newcomer high schools, including the international high schools, is limited. Some studies (e.g., Jaffe, 2016; Martin-Beltrán, Montoya-Ávila, García, & Canales, 2018; Straubhaar, 2013) indicate that newcomer schools offer many positive writing experiences and promote writing engagement. Yet, these schools do not seem to provide NLHSs with enough opportunities to learn that writing can be a tool for personal and social change (for an exception, see Martin-Beltrán al., 2018). Still, NLHSs need to be able to understand and utilize writing (in both English and their home languages) as transformational tool, which can help them improve their world and enhance their life chances.

Moreover, although NLHSs could learn how to conceive and use writing as a transformational tool through participatory action research (PAR), the relation between NLHSs' involvement in PAR and their writing has not been directly studied. PAR is a “systematic, empirical research in collaboration with representatives of the population under investigation, with the goal of action or intervention into the issues or problems

being studied” (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009, p. 1). PAR encourages students to become co-researchers and investigate social issues of their interest. In the process of doing PAR, the student coresearchers have multiple opportunities to use writing as a way to reflect on and change their worlds. Thus, unlike other inquiry programs and approaches, PAR always has the potential to help students view writing as tool for transformation (Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2011; de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; García, Mirra, Morrell, Martínez, & Scorza, 2015; Irizarry, 2008; King, 2013; LaDuke, 2010; Mirra, García, & Morrell, 2016; Morrell, 2003; 2006, 2007; Noonan, 2009). However, researchers have not investigated the impact of PAR on NLHSs’ conceptions of writing. I sought to address this research gap with my dissertation study.

Study Purpose & Research Questions

The overarching purpose of my study was to explore the relation between NLHSs’ conceptions of writing and their involvement in a PAR process that unfolded at an afterschool program in an Internationals’ newcomer high school. To achieve this purpose, I concentrated on addressing three research questions:

1. How do NLHSs perceive PAR?
2. How do NLHSs conceive writing before, during, and immediately after participating in a PAR process?
3. What aspects of the PAR process impact NLHSs’ conceptions of writing and how?

Overview of the Theoretical Framework

This dissertation study draws on two theoretical perspectives, Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning and critical pedagogy. Sociocultural theory (SCT) connects the social and individual aspects of learning; it describes learning as a process that occurs through individuals' social interactions, which are mediated by cultural tools and embedded in sociohistorical contexts (Moll, 2014; Rogoff, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and a set of instructional approaches that attempt to transform social inequities through teaching (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2017; McLaren, 2015). These two complementary perspectives allowed me to have a better understanding of the learning and instruction that occurred during the PAR process.

More specifically, I used SCT as a lens to examine how NLHSs learned about writing throughout the PAR process. Following SCT scholars (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath 1982; Moje, 2000), I conceptualized both learning and writing as social processes, situated in particular socio-cultural-historical contexts, that can affect how individuals think and act. I then examined how the specific context of the PAR-based afterschool program (embedded in the Internationals' newcomer high school) shaped NLHSs' conceptions and engagement with both writing and research.

Critical pedagogy, which is the foundation of PAR (Torres, 1992, 1995), helped me design and frame the youth's learning experiences. From a critical perspective, most human endeavors (including teaching, learning, research, and writing) can help scrutinize sociopolitical phenomena, address untoward social circumstances, and liberate oneself and others (Luke, 2012). I drew on that premise and on other critical pedagogy principles

(described in Chapter 2) to work with a group of NLHSs and to create an afterschool program whereby they could learn how to use research and writing as tools to explore and potentially change themselves and their worlds. Critical pedagogy scholarship also guided me in examining the assets, opportunities, and contradictions of the PAR process, the school, and my NLHS coresearchers.

Overview of the Study Methodology

This research project unfolded at an Internationals' newcomer high school called Multicultural High (pseudonym), located near the Washington DC metropolitan area. The study and its focal program grew out of a collaborative project between Multicultural High personnel, university researchers, and members of several non-profits. Initially, in 2016, we worked together to encourage immigrant students to write and (re)own their migration journeys. I joined the project as a volunteer tutor and research assistant because I wanted to support and better understand Latinx immigrant youth's writing. Being a former Spanish and English teacher allowed me to assist the writing and learning processes of the bi-/multi-lingual, immigrant students involved in that project. However, because I am a foreign-born Latina immigrant who has experienced the transformational power of writing and research, I dreamed of creating and examining a program that encouraged Latinx immigrant students to use both research and writing as tools to transform themselves and their worlds. I knew I wanted to do a PAR-based dissertation. In the Spring of 2019, with the support of Multicultural High staff and university mentors, I was able to make my dream come true and implement the program. Ultimately, the program and my dissertation study sought to enhance the educational

opportunities available to NLHSs and to examine the relation between youth's research and writing.

The study had a “two-tiered design” (Brown, 2010). As part of the first tier, a small group of Multicultural High students ($n = 15$) and I met weekly for 14 weeks to establish a research team and work together, as coresearchers, in investigations grounded in PAR principles (discussed in Chapter 2). The studies focused on school-related issues (i.e., students' sadness, teachers' happiness, and students' reactions to unwanted changes) that the participating youth considered important. In the first study tier, the immigrant youth coresearchers and I aimed to better understand the youth's selected issues by collecting and analyzing data from participant observations and semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers. Throughout the research process, the youth and I frequently used written and oral language to reflect on our actions and to examine future courses of individual and collective action. In other words, we engaged in praxis by writing and talking with one another. Doing PAR (i.e. the PAR process) offered us myriad opportunities not only to tailor the afterschool program but also to use and think together about research and writing.

The second tier of the study involved taking a bird's-eye view of what was happening in the first tier. For the second tier, I conducted a qualitative critical inquiry on the conceptions of writing and research of four focal youth coresearchers, who were newcomers to the US, self-identified as Latinx, and were enrolled in either tenth or eleventh grades at Multicultural High. This critical inquiry was the primary focus of my dissertation. Data collection for my dissertation study included multiple ethnographic methods—namely, participant observation of the PAR activities and semi structured

interviews with the four focal students and two Multicultural High teachers who were familiar with the students' writing. I analyzed the collected data inductively and deductively (Creswell, 2014), using the *constant comparison method* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the analysis, I considered some *sensitizing concepts* (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) from critical social theories, critical pedagogy, sociocultural theories of learning, and writing scholarship. I detail the study methodology in Chapter 4.

Study Significance

This research is significant for three main reasons. First, the study expanded the writing scholarship by exploring the writing conceptions of immigrant high schoolers in the US. Thus far, most of the literature on writing conceptions has centered on college-level students (especially, in Europe); very few studies (e.g., Villalón et al., 2015) have investigated the writing conceptions of secondary-level students. None of the extant studies, to the best of my knowledge, has examined how secondary-level, immigrant students in the US conceive writing. This research gap is concerning because, as mentioned earlier, immigrant high schoolers often have unique assets, challenges, experiences, and perceptions. Therefore, the theories based on mainstream, college-level students' writing conceptions may not neatly apply to NLHSs. My dissertation addressed this issue by comparing the focal NLHSs' writing perspectives to the writing conception models and categories available in the existing literature.

Second, this investigation contributed to the PAR literature by studying how a specific group of minoritized students perceived and engaged in the process of doing PAR. Prior research (e.g., Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2011; Morrell, 2003, 2008b; Ozer, 2016; Ozer & Wright, 2012) has suggested that minoritized youth—among whom

are Latinx teenagers—may increase their understanding of and engagement in research as they participate in PAR-centered processes. However, to the best of my knowledge, none of those extant studies has focused on NLHSs’ experiences during PAR processes. Thus, education scholars and practitioners cannot ascertain whether NLHSs experience and benefit from PAR in the same ways as other youth. My study sought to increase our understanding of youth’s participation in PAR by delving into the focal NLHSs’ PAR perceptions and experiences.

Third, the study addressed a crucial empirical gap by investigating the relation between youth coresearchers’ writing and their involvement in PAR. Researchers (e.g., Bocci, 2016; King, 2013; Noonan, 2009; Tate, 2011) have found that youth may increase their interest or involvement in writing as they participate in programs based on critical pedagogy and PAR. However, the extant studies have not directly investigated *how* the PAR processes shape the youth’s writing conceptions⁴ and engagement. Thus, the mechanisms by which PAR influences (or not) the youth’s writing were unclear in the literature. My study clarified the relation between coresearchers’ PAR involvement and writing conceptions by examining, through the lenses of critical pedagogy and SCT, the mechanisms whereby the PAR process impacted the focal NLHSs’ writing conceptions. And, in doing so, I connected three bodies of literature –NLHSs’ writing, students’ writing conceptions, and minoritized youth’s participation in PAR– that are related, but had remained separate in research.

Taken as a whole, the study could improve educators’ understanding of NLHSs’ engagement with and learning of writing and research. The study findings may inform the

⁴ In this manuscript, I employ the terms “writing conceptions” and “conceptions of writing” interchangeably. And, I use the words “conceive” and “perceive” as synonyms.

development of programs specifically targeted for immigrant, Latinx students, which may help provide better learning opportunities for this largely underserved population while also allowing students to promote social changes and improve their circumstances. I further discuss the study significance in Chapters 3 and 5.

Definition of Key Terms

Critical pedagogy: An educational approach whereby students and educators engage in a process of dialogue, inquiry, and action to name and ultimately transform oppressive social conditions (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1970/2018).

Latinx is gender-neutral noun and adjective. As a noun, *Latinx* refers to individuals of Latin American origin living in the United States. As an adjective, *Latinx* describes a noun as related to Latin American countries or territories.

Multimodal composition: A text that incorporates more than one medium or mode of communication, such as writing plus images or audio (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

Newcomers: Immigrant students who have resided in the US for less than four years and who are in the process of learning English (Short & Byson, 2012).

Participatory action research (PAR): “systematic, empirical research in collaboration with representatives of the population under investigation, with the goal of action or intervention into the issues or problems being studied” (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009, p. 1).

Writing: A cognitive tool and a socially situated activity that entails (re)creating texts (Kibler, 2019; Prior, 2006).

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

My study on the NLHSs' conceptions of research and writing was grounded in critical pedagogy and sociocultural theories of learning. In this chapter, I first explain how critical pedagogy and sociocultural theories inform the study's approach to teaching, learning, and researching. I then concentrate on two constructs related to critical pedagogy—critical literacy and participatory action research—which are at the core of my dissertation study.

Critical Pedagogy

The term *critical* comes from the Greek adjective *kriticos*, “the ability to argue and judge” (Luke, 2012, p. 5). Currently, in language and literacy education, the term critical has two main meanings, as described by Luke (2004): (a) “higher order reading comprehension and sophisticated personal response to literature” (p. 21) and (b) scrutinizing the “rules of exchange” within a social exchange (p. 26). I conceive the term critical along the lines of the second definition. Specifically, in this dissertation, I use the term critical to characterize individuals or educational programs that, drawing on critical theory or pedagogy, examine sociopolitical phenomena, activities, and circumstances.

Critical pedagogy has become an umbrella term, encompassing numerous teaching approaches that share the goal of transforming extant social inequities and injustices and supporting marginalized populations (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2017; McLaren, 2015). The roots of critical pedagogy lie in numerous bodies of work (Darder et al., 2017), ranging from Socrates' pedagogic work in ancient Greece to Hegel's philosophy and Marx's theories (Morrell, 2008a). Yet, the strand of critical pedagogy guiding my dissertation study derives mainly from the scholarship of the Frankfurt

School, Paulo Freire, and some of Freire's collaborators in the US. For that reason, in this section, I concentrate on describing the contributions of these scholars to critical pedagogy in general and to my study in particular.

Key contributors to critical pedagogy.

The Frankfurt School.

The Frankfurt School was a collaborative of philosophers and social scientists who were affiliated with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research—a Marxist-inspired research center— and who sought to explain domination and promote social change (Darder et al., 2017; Morrell, 2004). Frankfurt School theorists (e.g., Horkheimer, 1968/2002) criticized “traditional theory”—e.g., Baconian philosophy and its application to the natural sciences— for focusing on decontextualized facts and not contributing to proletarian emancipation. The Frankfurt scholars advocated for establishing a “critical theory,” a human activity centered on studying particular sociohistorical settings to understand and spur “human emancipation” (McLaren, 2015; Morrell, 2004). The Frankfurt School's notion of creating and using theory to liberate oppressed people inspired educators to create a pedagogy (later called “critical pedagogy”) that helped both students and teachers emancipate themselves. A prominent figure in the development of critical pedagogy is Paulo Freire.

Paulo Freire.

In line with the Frankfurt School's pursuit of human emancipation and based on his involvement in various adult education projects in Latin America and Africa, Freire proposed a pedagogy aimed at liberating the oppressed (Darder et al., 2017; Glass, 2001).

He expounded on his comprehensive pedagogy in several books (e.g., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970/2018; *Pedagogy of Hope*, 1994/2004). Freire (1970/2018) harshly criticized traditional pedagogy and its “banking concept of education,” in which the teacher played the central role of producer and communicator of knowledge and the students were relegated to “receive, file and store” information (p. 72). This type of education, according to Freire (1970/2018), denied students access to true “creativity, transformation, [or] knowledge” (p. 72) and, therefore, negated their humanity.

In stark contrast to traditional pedagogy, Freire (1970/2018) put forth a “radical” or “emancipatory” education, in which both teachers and students dialogued and engaged in a continuous *praxis*—a process of action and reflection—to co-construct knowledge and liberate themselves and others. Freire upheld that, through this emancipation-oriented pedagogy, both teachers and learners regained their humanity and could transform their local conditions and the society at large. Freire successfully implemented his pedagogy with low-income adults in Brazil and Papua New Guinea and, in doing so, demonstrated that emancipatory/critical pedagogy could improve the lived conditions of oppressed peoples and bring about positive social changes at the local level (for more information on Freire’s application of his pedagogical approach, see Freire & Macedo, 1987). Since then, Freirean pedagogy has been applied and adapted in the US and in many other nations, which has generated varied pedagogical approaches grouped under the umbrella term of *Freirean critical pedagogy*.

US supporters of Freirean critical pedagogy.

Although today many US educators use critical pedagogy, just a handful of scholars collaborated with Freire and implemented his pedagogical approach in the US

during Freire's lifetime. The latter scholars—among whom are Henry Giroux, Myles Horton, Peter McLaren, and Antonia Darder—laid important groundwork for the critical pedagogy movement. Giroux (1983) was the first author to use the term “critical pedagogy” in a textbook (Darder et al., 2017). In *Theory and Resistance in Education*, Giroux (1983) drew on various theories (including Freire's) to explicate how schools perpetuated inequities and unequal power relations as well as how people could resist the constraining educational systems. As his 1983 book exemplifies, Giroux has contributed to critical pedagogy by offering new conceptual tools to explore the cultural and ideological dimensions of schooling while amplifying Freire's call for social and educational transformation.

Another early supporter of Freire in the US was Myles Horton, a Tennessean educator who co-founded the Highlander Folk School (now called the Highlander Research and Education Center) to support the education of socially and economically marginalized individuals. Like Freire's, Horton's pedagogy was based on dialogue and aimed to support the liberation and self-determination of oppressed populations (Darder et al., 2017; Jacobs, 2003). Horton contributed to the development of critical pedagogy as he showed, through his own teaching practice, the relevance of dialogic education in highly industrialized countries like the US.

As Horton, Peter McLaren has also attempted to implement and adapt Freirean critical pedagogy in US classrooms. McLaren's (2015) take on critical pedagogy combines Freire's work with Marxist humanist philosophy. Through his scholarly career, McLaren has advocated for using critical pedagogy as a tool to support people's *agency*—which is the human capacity to act in specific sociopolitical contexts and to

potentially transform the existing social orders, including regimes of power and privilege (McLaren, 1994). Particularly, according to McLaren (1994, 2015), critical pedagogues must encourage minoritized students to situate their actions and experiences within larger social orders in order to help them make informed sociopolitical choices and act in ways that emancipate them from oppressive socioeconomic systems. Thus, McLaren (2015) has foregrounded the notion of students' agency and the sociopolitical dimensions of critical pedagogy.

Like McLaren, Antonia Darder—a Puerto Rican educator involved with Chicano/Latino social movements since the 1970s—has made an enormous contribution to Freirean critical pedagogy by highlighting the politics and power of education. However, Darder's work is unique in that it foregrounds the bicultural and linguistic struggles affecting Students of Color, particularly Latinxs. Darder's (1991) work guided me in providing Latinx students with opportunities to embrace and enact their biculturality in the afterschool program.

Transnational contributors to Freirean critical pedagogy.

It is crucial to recognize (at least briefly) that many African American, Caribbean, and Latin American scholars, who lived in the US and abroad, made significant contributions to Freirean critical pedagogy. African American intellectuals⁵ like W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson set theoretical and ideological foundations for many of

⁵ Although most African American intellectuals resided in the U.S. during most their lifetime, they were often connected to other scholars outside the U.S. For instance, Du Bois completed part of his graduate work in Germany, under the mentorship of well-known, European social scientists; Woodson was a regular writer for the *Negro World*, a weekly publication on issues of interest for Black people that was distributed in the U.S. and overseas (Darder et al., 2007; Morrell, 2008a). Hence, the thought of African American scholars is not only influenced by but also influential in transnational ideologies and practices.

the present-day struggles aimed at incorporating anti-racism and multi-culturalism in education and at improving the social conditions of People of Color, including Latinxs (Darder et al., 2017; Morrell, 2008a). Similarly, some Caribbean scholars from African descent, such as Frantz Fanon, provided theoretical tools to recognize and thwart their oppression and colonization; these tools became a building block for critical pedagogy. Indeed, Freire himself (1970/2018) cited Fanon's work as he analyzed the behavior of oppressed people and suggested ways to support the marginalized in their struggle for liberation. Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge that Freire's approach to pedagogy was rooted in "El Movimiento de Educación Popular," a social movement that emerged in the mid-XX century in Latin America and that sought to reclaim indigenous ways of knowing and to expand public, liberatory education (Mejía, 2011). Thereby, the ideas of the Latin American supporters of El Movimiento de Educación Popular (e.g., Patricio Lopes and Augusto Boal) permeated and enhanced Freirean pedagogy (Mejía, 2011).

Freirean pedagogy also developed through and contributed to *liberation theology*, "a social and political movement within the church that attempts to interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ through the lived experiences of oppressed people" (Dault, 2014, p. 46). The movement, which originated in Latin America in the mid-1950s, drew on Freire's pedagogical approach to help the marginalized better understand their reality and transform repressive socioeconomic and political systems (Boff, 2011; Kirylo & Boyd, 2017). For example, in Central and South America, some liberation theology supporters organized peasants and proletarians into autonomous worshiping communities, or *comunidades eclesiales de base*. In the communities, priests and local people discussed both the Scriptures and their personal/social struggles (Kirylo & Boyd, 2017). These

communities allowed people to increase their sociopolitical consciousness and engage in sociopolitical actions—e.g., publicly denouncing unjust governments and inequitable social structures (Kirylo & Boyd, 2017). Thus, the communities incorporated several principles of Freirean critical pedagogy: dialoguing, intertwining reflection and social action, and working towards sociopolitical liberation (the principles are further discussed below.) However, because liberation theology in general and the communities in particular represented a threat to the sociopolitical status quo, local and (inter)national governments sought to eradicate them by assassinating their leaders (e.g., the Salvadorian priests Rutilio Grande and Óscar Romero) and terrorizing the population. Still, the emancipatory legacy of liberation theology (along with its application of Freirean pedagogy) persists in many Latin American nations⁶ (Kirylo & Boyd, 2017; Levine, 1988).

Principles of critical pedagogy.

As Darder et al. (2017) and Morrell (2003, 2008a) suggested, Freirean critical pedagogy rests on five core tenets—i.e., historicity, ideology, praxis, dialogue and conscientization, and emancipation:

1. Freirean critical pedagogy acknowledges people’s *historicity*—i.e., “the human capacity to produce culture and history even as culture and history produce human existence” (Glass, 2001, p. 20). This pedagogy therefore requires that both learners and instructors analyze how history and culture have shaped their identities and social conditions as well as how they

⁶ An extended discussion of liberation theology and its impact on Latin America is beyond the scope of this review. For more information on this topic, see Levine (1988).

reproduce or (potentially) alter culture and history (Freire, 1970/2018; Glass, 2001).

2. Freirean critical pedagogy seeks to uncover and interrogate *ideologies*, or the “framework[s] of thought” that society and its members utilize “to create order and give meaning to the social and political world in which we live” (Darder et al., 2017, p. 11). Through the interrogation of multiple ideologies and viewpoints, critical pedagogues and learners identify (and oftentimes address) the extant contradictions between “mainstream culture” and the experiences and knowledges of marginalized people (Darder et al., 2017; McLaren, 2015)
3. Freirean critical pedagogy relies on the premise that *praxis*—i.e., the process of reflection and action upon the world to transform it (Freire, 1970/2018)—is a defining feature of human life and a necessary condition of freedom (Glass, 2001). Hence, Freirean critical pedagogy entails that both teachers and learners continuously and intentionally engage in cycles of action-reflection, situated in the specific dynamic historical and cultural contexts where their teaching/learning activities are occurring (Glass, 2001).
4. Freirean critical pedagogy requires *dialogue*, a collective process of knowing and learning based on epistemological curiosity and on teacher-learner partnership. Dialogue, in turn, may engage teachers and learners in a process of *conscientization* (or *conscientização*), in which they increase

their understanding of their sociopolitical conditions, contradictions, and possibilities (Freire, 1970/2018).

5. Freirean critical pedagogy strives for the *emancipation* of marginalized people; it confronts social injustice and seeks to transform oppressive realities to emancipate both the oppressed and oppressors (Freire, 1970/2018; Glass, 2001).

The five core tenets underlay my dissertation study: Through the afterschool program the newcomer, Latinx youth researchers and I delved into our historicity and ideologies as well as engaged in praxis and dialogue to increase our conscientization and work towards emancipation.

Rationale for drawing on Freirean critical pedagogy.

My rationale for selecting critical pedagogy as a lens to examine and design NLHSs' learning experiences is three-fold. First, critical pedagogy offers valuable concepts and practices (e.g., ideology and dialogue) to reflect on the relationships between politics, public schooling, and capitalist economies as well as on school practices that reproduce or transform social inequalities. Second, the work of critical pedagogues (e.g., McLaren, 1994, 2015) provides useful guidance on how to understand and encourage student agency and liberation. Third, through the lens of critical pedagogy, I can view the school and the program as spaces full of contradictions and opportunities for transformation, where adults and youth can collaborate to effect social changes and struggle for liberation (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 2015).

Critical literacy.

A pillar of Freirean critical pedagogy is *critical literacy* (Darder et al., 2017).

From a Freirean vantage point (e.g., Freire, 1970/2018; Freire & Macedo, 1987), literacy can be a tool for emancipation. Therefore, literacy is inextricably linked to emancipatory or critical pedagogy. In this subsection, I first provide an overview of Freire and colleagues' conceptions of critical literacy. I then discuss some contemporary definitions of critical literacy.

Freire and colleagues' conceptions of literacy.

Freire seldom used the term *critical literacy* in his own writings, yet he alluded to that construct in several of his manuscripts. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2018), for example, Freire highlighted the importance of reading, discussing, and analyzing texts. He contended that “this practice [of analyzing texts] helps develop a sense of criticism, so that people will react to newspapers or news broadcasts not as passive objects of the ‘communiques’ directed at them, but rather as consciousnesses seeking to be free” (Freire, 1970/2018, pp. 122-123). This excerpt seems to indicate that Freire conceived literacy as a practice that helps individuals establish a critical stance and liberate themselves.

Indeed, contrary to many of their contemporaries, Freire and Macedo (1987) did not perceive literacy as a discrete set of cognitive skills. Rather, they considered literacy as “eminently a political phenomenon” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 142) that often served as a medium to produce and confirm conditions that privileged certain groups and subordinated others. Yet, Freire and Macedo (1987) concurred with Walmsley’s (1981, p. 84) in that literacy could also be “one the major vehicles by which ‘oppressed’ people are

able to participate in the sociohistorical transformation of their society.” Hence, Freire and Macedo (1987) advocated for creating “emancipatory literacy” programs, in which the oppressed could learn how to use reading and writing to acquire “the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 157) in order to emancipate themselves and transform their social conditions.

Among the first to join Freire and Macedo’s (1987) conversation on the notion of emancipatory literacy were Lankshear and McLaren (1993). Like Freire and Macedo (1987), Lankshear and McLaren (1993) contended that emancipatory literacy, or *critical literacy*, as they preferred to call it, involved “understand[ing] and practic[ing] reading and writing in ways that enhance[d] the quest for democratic emancipation, for empowerment of the subordinated, the marginalized Other” (p. xviii). Lankshear and McLaren (1993) underscored that critical literacy neither followed a “colonizing logic” nor promoted a particular reading of the world. But rather, Lankshear and McLaren (1993) argued, critical literacy aimed at interrogating the dominance or exclusion of certain groups and their narratives. In other words, for Lankshear and McLaren (1993), critical literacy was not about indoctrinating people but about taking a questioning stance and supporting oppressed people’s in their own praxis-based processes of empowerment, self-determination, and liberation. Lankshear and McLaren’s (1993) conception of critical literacy broadened and opened venues for exploring literacy as a transformational tool around the world.

Other educators in the United States, Australia, and Latin America (e.g., Comber & Simpson, 2001; Freebody, Muspratt, Luke, 1995; Giroux, 1983; Janks, 2000, 2013; Mejia, 2011; Shor & Pari, 1999) have also promoted Freire’s (1970/2018) and Freire and

Macedo's (1987) approach to emancipatory, transformational literacy. These scholars share the concern of "how language might be put to different, more equitable uses, and how texts might be (re) created to tell a different story of other possibilities in a more just world" (Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000, p. 127). To that end, they have drawn on Marxist (Gramscian) theory of ideology, feminism, post-colonialism, cultural studies, and other such discourses of difference (Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000). Although the work of these writers is commonly grouped under the label of Freirean "critical literacy," vast differences exist in how they conceive and work with literacy.

Twenty-first century conceptions of critical literacy.

In contemporary literature, the definition of or approach to critical literacy is not monolithic; but rather, there are multiples "versions" of critical literacy (Behrman, 2006; Darder et al., 2017; Morgan & Wyatt-Smith, 2000). For example, the authors of the empirical literature concerning LHSs' critical literacies have described critical literacy as an act/practice (e.g., Butler, 2017; Lesley, 2008) or as a theory/framework (e.g., Barrett, 2013; García et al., 2015; Noonan, 2009; Sepúlveda, 2011). While these conceptions appear to overlap, they still may reveal a key confusion about critical literacy: Critical literacy is sometimes conceived as a stand-alone theory or pedagogical technique, detached from its critical roots and its vital commitment to sociopolitical transformation.

Still, Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys' (2002) work has helped scholars recognize the complexity and potential of critical literacy. Based on a review of the professional and empirical literature on critical literacy published worldwide over a 30-year period, Lewison et al. (2002) asserted that critical literacy is generally characterized as a practice with four interrelated main "dimensions": (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2)

interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice. Lewison et al. (2002) utilized those dimensions as categories to analyze how a group of elementary school teachers incorporated critical literacy in their classrooms. Following Lewison and colleagues (2002) example, other educators (e.g., Barrett, 2013; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006; Wallowitz, 2007) have employed the “four dimensions framework” to identify and examine manifestations of critical literacy. In doing so, the researchers have found that the last two dimensions—focusing on sociopolitical issues and taking action and promoting social justice— are less visible or less common than the other dimensions. It seems that educators have deemphasized the key sociopolitical and transformational aspects of critical literacy.

Nevertheless, as Van Sluys et al. (2006) noted, practicing critical literacy should entail:

“taking up of alternative reading positions, questioning how texts work ideologically (Luke & Freebody, 1997), engaging in the tensions of competing voices (Edelsky, 1999), moving toward the critique of issues that surround us (P. Green, 2001), and transforming social conditions (Freire & Macedo, 1998).” (p. 199)

Based on Lewison et al.’s (2002), Van Sluys et al.’s (2006), Morell’s (2003, 2008a), and my own understanding of critical literacy, I define *critical literacy* as a constellation of beliefs, values, and behaviors focused on consuming and creating texts aimed to bring about sociopolitical change and reduce social inequities. However, I must acknowledge that the theoretical and empirical literature on critical literacy has focused more on reading than on writing and has overlooked how learners (rather than teachers)

approach writing in critical literacy programs. To partially fill out these gaps in the critical literacy knowledge base, I drew on literature concerning students' conceptions of writing.

Conceptions of Writing

Since the 1970s, many researchers (e.g., Biggs, 1970; Marton & Säljö, 1976, 1997; Säljö, 1979) have studied people's approaches to learning and learning-related activities, such as reading and writing. Biggs (1970, 1973) found that undergraduate students utilized two kinds of study strategies: a *reproductive strategy*, which involved adhering strictly to instructors' guidelines and memorizing specific pieces of information, and a *transformational strategy*, which required integrating different sources of information and crafting an individual perspective. Students who employed a transformational strategy typically obtained higher knowledge test scores and created higher quality essays than students who used a reproducing strategy (Biggs, 1973).

Like Biggs (1970, 1973), Marton and Säljö (1976, 1997) argued that people's approaches to learning (i.e., forms of understanding and handling learning processes) were either "deep-level" or "surface-level." The *surface approach* was based on the idea that learning meant remembering and repeating distinct pieces of information; the *deep approach* focused on trying to understand the subject matter as a whole and apply it to one's life (Marton & Säljö, 1997). Whereas the surface approach often led to rote learning, the deep approach allowed students to appropriate knowledge and change how they viewed themselves and their reality (Marton & Säljö, 1997). Taking a deep approach (rather than a surface approach) has been associated with higher academic achievement and understanding among college students (Biggs & Tang, 2007). From my perspective,

the deep approach and transformational strategy to learning are more in line with critical pedagogy than the surface approach and reproductive strategy because the former seek to reflect on and alter knowledge and own's conditions—which are key principles of critical pedagogy.

Building on the scholarship on approaches to learning, researchers have explored people's conceptions of and approaches to writing. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) proposed two writing models (i.e., *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming*) that mirrored the distinction between the reproducing/surface and transforming/deep learning approaches. In the knowledge telling model of writing, people perceive and engage in writing as a way of transmitting information (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). In the knowledge transforming model, people approach writing as a series of rhetorical problems, in which they strategically organize and combine information to achieve their own rhetorical purposes and (re)generate knowledge (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). In other words, following Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987), individuals could conceive writing as a reproductive or a transformational activity.

Scholars have investigated learners' conceptions of writing through different lenses—namely, *metacognitive*, *phenomenographic*, and *implicit beliefs*. The metacognitive standpoint assumes that writing is an individual problem-solving process (Mateos & Solé, 2012). Studies rooted in this viewpoint generally examine people's understanding of their own cognitive processes and how this understanding influences their writing processes and products (Mateos & Solé, 2012). Differently, phenomenographic research centers on the idea that people experience writing in different ways; therefore, these studies explore how people experience and talk about

writing (Ellis, Taylor, & Drury, 2006; Light, 2002). Both the metacognitive and the phenomenographic lenses focus on people's explicit conceptions of writing, which are often gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and think-aloud protocols (Mateos & Solé, 2012).

By contrast, the implicit beliefs model emphasizes tacit writing conceptions. Researchers who adhere to the implicit model study argue that people hold epistemological (and often unstated) beliefs about writing that directly and indirectly shape how they engage in writing (Mateos & Solé, 2012). They contend that tacit writing conceptions can be inferred from observations of people's enactment of writing and from people's statements about writing (Mateos & Solé, 2012). Yet these scholars maintain that, to have a complete understanding of writing conceptions, studies must examine data from multiple sources—such as observations of writing processes, written texts, and writing conceptions questionnaire (e.g., Villalón & Mateos, 2009)—and address both tacit and explicit beliefs. My study drew on the implicit beliefs model because it provided me with a wider vantage point than the other lenses; the implicit model allowed me to explore both explicit and tacit writing conceptions among NLHSs.

The implicit beliefs model has recently gained traction and engendered a growing body of research. White and Bruning (2005) applied their implicit models of reading (Schraw, 2000; Schraw & Bruning, 1996) to study writing and identified two implicit models of writing: transmissional and transactional. Like the knowledge telling model of writing (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987), the *transmissional model* is based on people's belief that writing is a simple vehicle to convey information to the reader (White & Bruning, 2005). This model or conception of writing—usually associated with

academic/school writing— leads authors to limit the presence of their own ideas in their texts and reduces their emotional and cognitive investment in the composition process (Villalón et al., 2015; White & Bruning, 2005). Authors who mainly hold *transactional beliefs*, on the other hand, conceive writing as a way to express and refine their own thoughts in a text; these beliefs often increase the writers' investment in the composition process (Mateos & Solé, 2012; White & Bruning, 2005). The models may shape not only the writing process but also the product—e.g., writers with high transactional beliefs may compose more persuasive texts than those who had high transmissional beliefs (White & Bruning, 2005). It shall be noted, however, that people can hold both types of beliefs and adjust their approaches based on the writing situation or task (Villalón et al., 2015).

While White and Bruning's (2005) explanation of the two models of writing seems compelling, I find their labels highly problematic. Both labels (transmissional and transactional) echo a banking concept of education (Freire, 1970/2018), which is at odds with the theoretical framework of my dissertation study. For that reason, I prefer to refer to these two writing conceptions as *reproductive* and *transformational/epistemic*, which are the terms that Villalón et al. (2015) used to describe high schoolers' academic writing conceptions. The reproductive conception implies viewing writing as a mechanical and linear process of conveying information; the transformational/ epistemic conception considers writing as a tool that can help writers acquire and transform knowledge or skills (Villalón et al., 2015). I uphold that programs based on Freirean critical pedagogy can and should promote a transformational/ epistemic conception of writing because this conception allows learners to (re)appropriate knowledge and bring about social changes through reading and writing, which are the ultimate goals of critical literacy.

Further, notwithstanding differences in terminology, scholars agree on the importance of understanding students' conceptions of writing, especially, as a way to promote the use of writing as a knowledge-transforming tool and enhance their learning opportunities (Delcambre & Donahue, 2012). The researchers also concur in that people's writing conceptions change across time and experience, frequently depending on their context and purpose of their writing and on the beliefs of other people involved in their writing activities (Falcón-Huertas, 2006).

However, significant gaps exist in the research literature. Importantly, we know relatively little about primary and secondary students' conceptions of writing because most of the studies on conceptions of writing have been conducted with college students. Yet, based on a few existing studies involving high school students in Europe (e.g., Villalón et al., 2015), it seems as if these pupils mainly hold transmissional/ reproductive conceptions of writing and are less aware of the transformational/epistemic value of writing than their college-level counterparts. It is unclear, however, if these conceptions ring true among students in the US. Indeed, before my study, the writing conceptions of immigrant Latinx high schoolers in the US were an uncharted terrain. To better comprehend how these conceptions developed and shifted, I drew on sociocultural theories of learning, which I turn to discuss next.

Sociocultural Theories of Learning, Literacy, & Writing

Sociocultural theories of learning (or cognitive development) stem from the work of Lev Vygotsky and his colleagues (e.g., Cole, 1988; Leont'ev, 1978, 1981; Luria, 1976; Rogoff, 1990, 1998, 2003; Wertsch, 1991), who argued that learning occurs as people participate in socio-cultural-historical practices—i.e., cultural ways of doing and thinking

embedded in particular sociohistorical contexts (Moll, 2014; Rogoff, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). Although sociocultural theories have evolved along several strands (Rogoff, 1998), these theories share an emphasis on defining learning as a social phenomenon (Moll, 2014; Rogoff, 1998; Wertsch, 1991).

From a sociocultural stance, an “opportunity to learn” is an interactional phenomenon. It is a chance for people to interact with others (directly or indirectly), have access to certain information, and make sense of the given information (Tuyay et al., 1995). In other words, an opportunity to learn is a chance for a person to relate with others and to draw connections between new knowledge and her/his prior knowledge (Tuyay et al., 1995). The most effective opportunities to learn, according to some SCT scholars (e.g., Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), are those that build on people’s *funds of knowledge*—i.e., their existing cultural-historical skills, resources, and bodies of knowledge (Moll, Armanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Those opportunities might also require learners to explain or represent their thinking, so that they can increase their awareness of how the new knowledge fits or transforms their prior knowledges (Tuyay et al., 1995). Unfortunately, not all students are afforded optimal opportunities to learn (see Carter & Welner, 2013).

Socioculturalists also contend that people’s cognitive processes and interactions are “mediated” by a key element: language. For Vygotsky, (1978) and his supporters (e.g., Mercer, 2004, 2008; Swain & Watanabe, 2008; Wertsch, 1991, 2007), language is a “cultural tool” that facilitates people’s thinking. That is, people can use written and oral language to articulate and develop their thoughts. Particularly, some sociocultural scholars (e.g., Mercer, 2004, 2008; Swain & Watanabe, 2008; Tuyay et al., 1995) uphold,

individuals increase their understanding of a subject as they propose ideas and explicate their reasoning to others through language (verbally and/or in writing). Some theorists (e.g., Mercer, 2003) further argue that people can change their ideas through dialogue, as they talk with and listen to others. Thus, SCT can help researchers comprehend how opportunities to learn are offered and taken (or not) as well as how individuals and groups develop certain thoughts. In my case, the SCT perspective aided me in understanding the opportunities to learn that the focal youth coresearchers had along the PAR process and how they developed particular conceptions of writing.

Besides revealing important aspects of learning, Vygotskian SCT has shed light on scholars' understanding of literacy. For Vygotsky (1978), language and literacy are socially, culturally, and historically situated tools for exploring, claiming, or transforming thought and experience. Following Vygotsky's work, scholars have moved from viewing literacy as a finite set of measurable reading and writing skills to consider it as a constellation of diverse sociocultural "practices" that involve using *texts*. Texts are spoken and/or written passages that form a unified whole and that can include or relate to other means of communication, such as images or gestures (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Prior, 2006). According to SCT scholars, individuals can acquire particular ways (or practices) to interpret and produce texts by interacting with others and can transform these practices as they participate in them (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath 1982; Moje, 2000; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2003). Further, some SCT literacy scholars the term "*literacy practices*" to refer to not only "*literacy events*," or the visible ways in which people interpret and create a text, but also to the broader cultural and social models, values, and beliefs shaping and shaped by these

events (Street, 2003). My dissertation concentrated on an “invisible” part of NLHSs’ literacy practices, their conceptions of writing.

From a SCT perspective, *writing* is then both a cognitive tool and a socially situated activity that entails (re)creating texts (Kibler, 2019; Prior, 2006). As a social activity, writing is connected to other numerous sociocultural practices (e.g., reading and publishing) and shaped by and interacting with numerous social and ideological factors—including political and economic conditions, sociocultural structures, and local and global ideologies (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2015; Moje, 2000; Schultz & Fecho, 2000; Street, 1984). To be clear, writing is neither totally dictated from outside nor exclusively created by individuals; instead, it stems from and reflects an interplay between the social and the individual (Kibler, 2019; Lantolf, 2005). For this reason, in my dissertation study, I examined the relationship between individual NLHSs’ conceptions of writing and the particular social contexts (namely, afterschool program sessions and subject matter classes) in which they engaged in/with writing.

Clearly, people’s conceptions of writing (or their beliefs about and approach to writing) are part of their general literacy practices (or their sociocultural ways of creating, using, and thinking about texts). If, for example, a person believes that writing is only matter of reproducing what others have said or written, it is likely that that person reads texts as models to be copied and creates texts that merely reiterate what she has read. A person who has a strong reproductive conception of writing may rarely use texts to disrupt the commonplace or craft texts aim at provoking sociopolitical changes (which is essential to critical literacy). A reproductive conception may therefore impede the development and enactment of critical literacy. Conversely, *critical literacy practices*—

defined as those practices of text interpretation and creation in which power and social dynamics are explored and questioned (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012)— may be at odds with a reproductive conception of writing. However, the relationship between people’s writing conceptions and their engagement in certain literacy events (including composing texts or writing) has not been empirically explored yet.

For my study, I viewed *writing engagement* broadly. Drawing on SCT-related scholarship (e.g., Kibler, 2019; Ortega, 2012; Prior, 2006; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012), I defined writing engagement as an individual’s dynamic participation—which may shift moment-by-moment or vary by context— in the social activity of creating texts. Further, building on SCT writing scholarship and on Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris’ (2004) analysis of the use of the term “engagement” in education literature, I considered that writing engagement could have three socially-entwined dimensions: cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. From my perspective, people’s engagement in/with writing could therefore encompass what they thought, did, and felt during or because of their involvement in particular writing activities. In fact, based on the literature on writing conceptions, I presumed that people’s writing conceptions could shape and be influenced by their engagement in/with writing. That is, the particular ways in which individuals participated in writing activities could be informed by how they view writing (in general), and their involvement in certain writing activities could affect how they conceived writing. The relation between writing engagement and writing conceptions, examined from a SCT stance, was the crux of my dissertation study.

In short, SCT was a lens that helped me unveil important aspects of learning in general and literacy/writing learning in particular. However, I recognized that SCT fell

short on some aspects of learning, such as power dynamics. These shortcomings, I argue below, can be addressed by complementing SCT with critical pedagogy.

Integrating Sociocultural Theories and Critical Pedagogy

Freirean critical pedagogy and SCT have similar assumptions and points of emphasis. From both theoretical perspectives, learners are viewed as active participants in the learning process. Also, both theories underscore that the individual is inextricable from the social realm, acknowledge that individuals can change themselves and others through dialogic teaching-learning processes, and aim to support learners in transforming and creating knowledge.

Moreover, Freirean critical pedagogy and SCT are complementary. Whereas critical pedagogy offers an instructional framework, SCT gives an account of how learning happens and how to analyze learning conditions. Freirean critical pedagogy also encourages scholars to address power imbalances and larger social structures and inequities; these issues have been somewhat overlooked in literature grounded in sociocultural approaches to literacy and learning. Given the complementarity of the frameworks, I used them in tandem as a framework to guide the design of my dissertation study and to analyze the collected data. I further explain the methods of my dissertation in Chapter 4.

Building on SCT and Critical Pedagogy: Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Although SCT and critical pedagogy seem to be complementary, a question looming large is: How can these two frames be brought together in teaching-learning

practices? From my perspective, SCT and critical pedagogy can be interwoven through PAR (participatory action research). As stated earlier, PAR is “systematic, empirical research in collaboration with representatives of the population under investigation, with the goal of action or intervention into the issues or problems being studied” (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009, p. 1). As both a form of research and a pedagogical practice, PAR seems not only consonant with the tenets of critical pedagogy but also offers the conditions that SCT scholars would deem as optimal for writing learning and engagement. To warrant my case, I first provide a brief overview of the origins of PAR and then, building on that background, I explain how PAR aligns and builds on both SCT and critical pedagogy.

PAR roots.

PAR emanates from several intellectual streams but mainly from the work of Lewin (1946) and Freire (1982). Originally, the social psychologist Kurt Lewin and the social philosopher Jacob L. Moreno postulated that the people being studied should work with the researcher throughout the research process (Gunz, 1996; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Lewin, 1946). Lewin (1946) often used the term *action research* while he discussed the close relation between conducting investigations and taking action to address the issues being studied.

Lewin’s seminal ideas were applied and developed in various fields of study, which generated multiple approaches to action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014). The approaches differ in their research interests, purposes, and methods (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014). For example, *industrial action research* has aimed to democratize forms of work and research by strengthening

collaborations between social scientists and members of industrial organizations, though research keeps being consultant-driven (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014). By contrast, PAR has sought to engage people as co-researchers in investigating social problems that affect them and to encouraged them to take the lead on the research process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009).

Many PAR scholars (e.g., Brown & Rodríguez, 2017; Córdova, 2004; Gaventa, 1993) uphold that people's knowledge of and experiences in their local, cultural-historical conditions are essential to understand and address social problems. Conducting PAR requires that members of the population under study are involved in *all* phases of the research project (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Mirra et al., 2016). The typical research phases are: (1) identifying a problem that directly affects the representatives of the population, (2) collecting and analyzing data to better understand the problem, and (3) devising and/or implementing strategic actions (e.g., socio-political organizing, training in "action," and public presentations) in response to research findings to address the focal problem (Ozer, 2016; Ozer & Wright, 2012; Payne & Brown, 2017; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009). The ultimate goal of the PAR process is to transform knowledge and practices in ways that improve the lives of marginalized people and empower local communities (Córdova, 2004; Gaventa, 1993; Park, 1993). Therefore, PAR is typically oriented towards community action and social change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014). Among all the types of action research, I consider PAR as the most appropriate for my dissertation study because, as I argue below, it is consistent with the two theoretical streams (SCT and Freirean critical pedagogy) that underlie my dissertation.

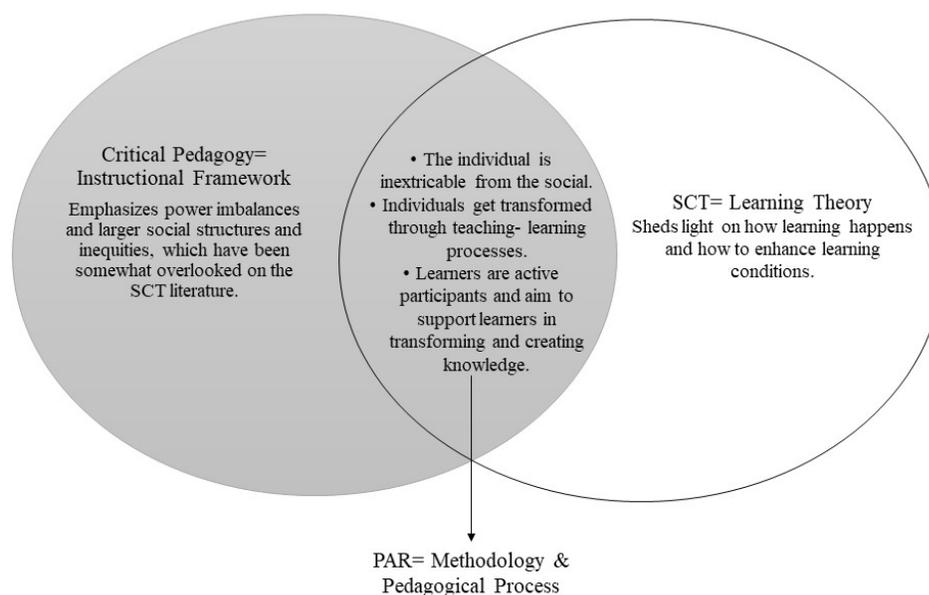
PAR alignment with SCT and critical pedagogy.

PAR is aligned with the tenets of both SCT and critical pedagogy. PAR relies on the premise that people are socio-historically situated beings who can interact and transform their worlds—which is a principle shared by SCT and critical pedagogy (as explained earlier.) Also, consistent with SCT scholars' recommendations, PAR allows youth the opportunity to draw on their interests and funds of knowledge (e.g., digital media use) as well as to interact with peers or more knowledgeable others to learn both content and literacy practices (Brown, 2010; Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2011; de los Ríos et al., 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; García et al., 2015; Irizarry, 2008; King, 2013; Kornbluh, Ozer, Allen, & Kirshner, 2015; LaDuke, 2010; Mirra et al., 2016; Morrell, 2006, 2007, 2008a; Noonan, 2009; Ozer, 2016, 2017; Ozer & Wright, 2012).

PAR is also closely related and consonant with critical pedagogy. Some scholars have viewed PAR as an “extension” (Torres, 1992, 1995) or as a “foundation” (Udas, 1998) of critical pedagogy. Indeed, PAR incorporates the five core tenets of Freirean critical pedagogy—i.e., historicity, ideology, praxis, dialogue and conscientization, and emancipation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Park, 1993). That is, PAR requires (a) examining the interplay between history, culture, and people's sociopolitical circumstances, (b) interrogating numerous ideas and frameworks of thought, (c) engaging in a continuous cycle of action-reflection, (d) using dialogue as a tool to gain awareness of sociopolitical phenomena, contexts, and possibilities, and (e) committing to employ research as vehicle to reduce social inequities and support the oppressed in their struggles for liberation (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Kemmis et al.,

2014). Figure 1 provides a representation of how critical pedagogy, SCT, and PAR relate to one another.

Figure 1. Connections among Critical Pedagogy, SCT, and PAR.



Moreover, PAR may support coresearchers in developing critical literacy. In PAR processes, youth typically have numerous opportunities to use and create texts (individually and in groups) that help them better understand and transform their worlds—which is the ultimate goal of critical literacy (Camarota, 2007; González, 2018; King, 2013; Morrell, 2003, 2007, 2008a; Noonan, 2009). SCT scholars (e.g., Prior, 2006; Street, 2003) would argue that the coresearchers' participation in these PAR-based processes of critically creating and interpreting texts would allow them to learn critical literacy practices, which may involve shifts in coresearchers' beliefs about literacy in general and in their writing conceptions in particular. However, there is not enough empirical evidence to warrant this theoretical premise.

My dissertation study sought to address part of this research gap by examining how NLHSs experienced the process of doing PAR and how (if at all) participation in the

PAR process impacted NLHSs' conceptions of writing. I chose PAR, rather than other inquiry-based pedagogical approaches (e.g., problem-based learning, project-based learning, and design-based learning), for two reasons. First, as argued above, PAR is congruent with the theoretical framework of my dissertation. Second, unlike other inquiry-based pedagogical approaches, PAR encourages coresearchers to use writing as a tool for social transformation, which let me explore in turn how the NLHS coresearchers' engagement in these transformation-oriented writing activities—which have been underexamined in the empirical scholarship—shaped NLHSs' conceptions of writing. Further, in my dissertation study, PAR was both the research methodology the coresearchers (the NLHSs and I) used and the process through which we provided local meaning to the program. I elaborate on this point by synthesizing the empirical literature on PAR in Chapter 3 and by describing my study methodology and the PAR process in Chapter 4.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I expounded on the framework of my dissertation study. I explained how SCT and critical pedagogy would contribute to my research; I argued that both SCT and critical pedagogy offer useful lenses to examine writing conceptions and engagement. I also contended that SCT and critical pedagogy are complementary and could be brought together through PAR. I further argued that, by bringing together SCT and critical pedagogy and engaging NLHSs' in PAR processes, researchers may be able to explore aspects of NLHSs' writing that have been overlooked. In the next chapter, I delve into what prior research studies have revealed about NLHSs' ideas about writing and their participation in PAR processes.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, I situate my dissertation within prior research by reviewing literature in two areas: (a) newcomer Latinx high schoolers' writing conceptions and engagement and (b) Latinx high schoolers' involvement in PAR processes. The review starts with an overview of how Latinx immigrant high schoolers conceive and engage in writing, especially in extracurricular programs, according to extant research. Next, I explain how PAR may impact NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement. I then synthesize the reviewed literature and identify crucial research gaps. In conclude by showing how my study could address the identified gaps and contribute to education scholarship.

Before proceeding, I should note that the scholarship reviewed in this chapter seldom focuses on newcomer Latinx high schoolers or draws on my dissertation's conceptual framework. Many of the reviewed studies involve newcomer Latinx high schoolers but do not center on this population; indeed, research on newcomer, Latinx high schoolers' writing and their involvement in PAR processes remains scant. The consulted studies also stemmed from multiple theoretical approaches—which were sometimes similar and sometimes different to the perspectives underpinning my study. Yet, the theoretical diversity of the studies allowed me to recognize the complex nature of Latinx immigrants' involvement in writing and PAR while also assessing the affordances and constraints of my own framework.

NLHSs' Conceptions of Writing

Although the existing empirical literature has not specifically focused on NLHSs' writing conceptions, some studies (e.g., Ek, 2008; Kibler, 2019; McCloud, 2015;

Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Stewart, 2014; Villalva, 2006) have tangentially addressed NLHSs' ideas about writing. Based on my reading of those studies and my understanding of the literature on writing conceptions, I conceptually organized the reported NLHSs' views into two groups: (a) *reproductive conceptions of writing* and (2) *transformational conceptions of writing*. These exact terms were not used in any of the reviewed studies, though Enright and Gilliland (2011) used similar but underexplained labels (i.e., record, reproduce, transform, and reflect) to categorize students' forms of writing participation in writing tasks. I explain and illustrate the two categories I identified in what follows.

Reproductive conceptions of writing.

Several researchers (e.g., Enright & Gilliland, 2011; Enright, Torres-Torretti, & Carreón, 2012; Gilliland, 2015; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) have found that some NLHSs viewed and used writing as a way to reproduce or copy information from textbooks, teacher lectures, or memory to answer specific questions on worksheets or tests and to complete school assignments. I call this view a “reproductive conception of writing.”

A good example of the reproductive writing conception is available in Villalva's (2006) study of Mexican high schoolers' involvement in an inquiry-based writing project. For one of the students, writing mainly involved adhering to the written assignment requirements and following the teacher-given formulas for sentence and paragraph structure (Villalva, 2006). Because of her writing conception, she did not take the project as an opportunity to use writing as a way to deeply explore her topic of interest or to spur any real-world change—as other students did (Villalva, 2006).

Like Villalva (2006), other researchers have documented that NLHSs' writing conceptions and uses often centered on knowledge reproduction (rather than knowledge transformation.) Gilliland (2015) found that, in two ninth-grade English classes (comprised of 28 students, half of whom were emergent bilinguals and some of whom were recent immigrants from Mexico), writing meant selecting the “correct answers” (according to textbooks or teachers' lectures) and replicating teacher-given “formulas”—i.e., written phrases and textual structures—during high-stakes tests and short writing assignments. Similarly, Enright and Gilliland's (2011) study of the writing experiences of 130 high school students revealed that most multilingual newcomers' writing focused on “recording information” (i.e., taking notes) or on “reproducing information” (i.e., copying.) Teachers reinforced students' reproductive writing conceptions and uses by rewarding students' adherence to a given structure or format rather than their analysis or creative thinking (Enright & Gilliland, 2011). I examine the possible causes of these conceptions and practices later in this chapter.

Research has also suggested that the so-called reproductive conception of writing may limit NLHSs' engagement in writing activities. If youth see writing as a repetitive activity done at school and disconnected from their personal lives, they may not be invested in writing activities or get discouraged from using writing creatively or critically—which is the goal of critical literacy and should be the aim of literacy education (Danzak, 2015; Hobbs, He & Robbgrico, 2015; Sepúlveda, 2011). Moreover, when the youth see writing as (re)utilization of specific formulas without comprehending when or how to use them, they may struggle with writing on their own and come to

perceive writing as a difficult endeavor or a “challenge” (Kibler, 2019; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007).

Transformational conceptions of writing.

Other scholars (Collazo, 2009; Ek, 2008; Gulla, 2015; Kibler, 2019; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007; Stewart, 2014; Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016; Villalva, 2006) have shown that NLHSs can conceive and utilize writing as a way to reflect on their personal experiences, enact agency, and/or change either themselves or their social contexts if they are given the adequate writing opportunities. For example, Gulla (2015) found that when newcomer high school students (some of whom were Latinx, from the Dominican Republic) were allowed to create poems about their migration experiences, they changed their views about poetry writing and reading. Instead of seeing poetry as “something to read [and write] for school” they came to view it as “a form of universal expression that is both personal and powerful” (Gulla 2015, p. 618). In other words, the students shifted from considering poetry writing a school-mandated activity to conceive it a personally-relevant and transformational activity. The students reported changing their perceptions of poetry, in particular, because that was the focal genre of the project; however, it is feasible that their conceptions of writing, in general, could have shifted if they had been allowed to work with other genres.

Moreover, scholars have found that NLHSs may develop a transformational conception of writing when they connect writing activities to social action. For instance, one of Villalva’s (2006) focal students discovered that writing could promote social change as she wrote a research paper about the misnaming and stereotyping of Native American’s sacred places. She used her paper to persuade her local government to change

the name of its “Indian Springs Park” to a name that recognized the specific indigenous group that once inhabited the area. Through the process, she came to understand and use writing not only as a way to express her thoughts and present various viewpoints but also as a tool to effect change in the real-world, beyond the classroom (Villalva, 2006). This kind of transformational conception increases students’ engagement in both writing and schooling (Villalva, 2006). I explain next how and why NLHSs hold certain writing conceptions.

PAR Influence on Writing Conceptions

While reading the empirical literature, I noticed that a wide variety of multidimensional, interrelated factors that could shape (directly and indirectly) NLHSs’ conceptions of writing. For example, federal education policies (e.g., No Child Left Behind) that mandate curricular standards and accountability measures have influenced teachers’ instructional practices and students’ writing practices and ideas at the classroom-level (Enright & Gilliland, 2011; McCloud, 2015). Yet, an in-depth discussion of all the factors would yield this review unwieldy. Instead, my review centered on how PAR processes may influence NLHSs’ writing conceptions and engagement. Because research on NLHSs’ involvement in PAR processes is scant, I had to draw on the literature on Latinx teenagers’ participation in PAR processes and supplement it with literature on NLHSs’ involvement in writing-focused programs.

Based on my interpretation of the literature, PAR can impact NLHSs’ writing conceptions and engagement through three main ways (or *mechanisms*)—namely, (a) building on students’ prior experiences and knowledge, (b) offering numerous opportunities to create various types of texts, and (c) promoting positive relations and

interactions among students and between teachers and students. I should note that the reviewed empirical literature on PAR alluded to those mechanisms of influence, yet the mechanisms were seldom the focus of those studies. I conceptualized those mechanisms by drawing on empirical literature on optimal learning experiences for minoritized populations and on the conceptual framework of this dissertation. I discuss these three mechanisms, and their connection to my dissertation study, in turn.

Building on students' prior experiences and knowledge.

SCT scholars (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992) would argue that building on students' prior experiences and knowledge is key to improve their learning and understanding. However, the empirical literature has not directly shown how building on NLHSs' prior experiences and knowledge in PAR processes could impact their learning and conceptions of writing. To explicate this mechanism, I had to draw on several bodies of literature.

More specifically, in this subsection, I review literature related to NLHSs' writing and Latinx youth's involvement in PAR in order to explain how building on NLHSs' prior experiences and knowledge in PAR processes could impact their writing conceptions. To do so, I first synthesize literature that demonstrates the connection between NLHSs' conceptions of writing and their prior writing experiences and their knowledge of writing. Next, I show how writing-focused programs that incorporate NLHSs' prior experiences and personal interests as well as their cultural and linguistic knowledge can expand the youth's writing conceptions and engagement. Lastly, I outline how PAR processes leverage youth's coresearchers' prior experiences and knowledge and how that could impact the youth's writing conceptions.

Connecting NLHSs' prior experiences and knowledge to writing conceptions.

Several studies (Collazo, 2009; Fránquiz & Salinas, 2013; Jaffee, 2016; Kibler, 2019; Skerrett, 2012; Stewart, 2014; Straubhaar, 2013) have indicated that NLHSs' conceptions of writing may be related to their prior writing experiences and their knowledge of writing. NLHSs' previous writing experiences, especially at school (in both the US and their home countries), may foster particular ideas about what writing is and entails. For instance, Rubinstein-Ávila's (2007) focal student, Yanira, shared that in her home country (the Dominican Republic) her writing activities centered on copying "information straight from the book" or from the teacher's notes on the board. Therefore, she came to believe that writing meant just "copying" to learn and remember given pieces of information.

However, when NLHSs' prior writing conceptions greatly differ from their current writing tasks and demands, NLHSs may shift their writing conceptions and engagement. Yanira, for example, changed from seeing writing as something relatively easy and predictable to viewing it as a frustrating and difficult activity after her high school teachers began asking her to write about what she thought or about multiple viewpoints (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007). Because she did not feel comfortable with writing about her or other's viewpoints, she developed a negative disposition towards writing (Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007).

Nonetheless, NLHSs' prior writing experiences and knowledge of writing can sometimes have a positive impact on their writing conceptions and engagement (Kibler, 2019; Straubhaar, 2013; Wald, 1987). Analyzing samples of spoken and written texts qualitatively and quantitatively, Wald (1987) established that Latinx, Spanish-speaking

high schoolers (n=15) drew on their writing skills in Spanish (their L1) while writing in English. Wald's (1987) findings were recently echoed in Straubhaar's (2013) study of students' experiences at a newcomer high school; three of his focal participants reported "feeling very comfortable writing in English, as they had already developed strong skills in academic writing while in Mexico" (p. 101). Simply put, NLHSs' prior writing experiences and knowledge of writing (in any language) can have a positive or negative impact on how they view and approach writing.

Incorporating NLHSs' experiences and knowledge into writing-focused programs.

Several studies have demonstrated that incorporating NLHSs' prior experiences and personal interests as well as their cultural and linguistic knowledge in the curriculum and instruction was crucial in expanding their writing conceptions and engagement. Jaffee (2016), for instance, reported that an outstanding social studies teacher (Mr. Smith) supported the writing process of his 24 newcomer students by asking them to write together about their lived experiences and encouraging them to connect their experiences to global issues (such as climate change) in their writing. In this way, the teacher leveraged students' experiential knowledge to help them learn the subject matter and to guide them in using writing as a tool to enact global citizenship. Similar to Mr. Smith, Molly—the focal teacher in Skerrett and Bomer's (2013) study—enhanced the writing experiences of her 16 ninth-grade students (several of whom were NLHSs) when she invited them to draw on their experiential and linguistic knowledge as they composed their texts about "border-crossing experiences." Skerrett and Bomer (2013) noted through their participant observations and textual analysis that the curriculum and

Molly's instructional approach encouraged students to recognize and leverage their own linguistic, cultural, and experiential knowledge, which, in turn, improved students' ideas and engagement in school-based writing.

Along a similar vein, Collazo (2009) found that, with the guidance of two excellent language teachers, Salvadoran students (some of whom were newcomers) came to perceive and use writing as a way to reflect on their life experiences and to create new understandings of what it meant to be a Latinx, transnational youth residing in Washington, D.C. This shift occurred as the students, prompted by their teachers, discussed and wrote about their past experiences in their home country, their migration experiences, their current experiences in the US as well as drew comparisons among all these experiences (Collazo, 2009). Together, teachers and students created transnational classroom contexts, which linked students' experiences in- and across- countries and which enhanced students' conceptions and involvement in writing (Collazo, 2009).

Evidence of the positive effects of incorporating NLHSs' cultures and languages into literacy programs is also available in Salazar and Fránquiz' (2008) case study of one first-year ESL teacher at a high school in Northern Colorado. The teacher initially adhered to the school's ESL department's instructional policy of "English-or-nothing"; she did not allow her students (most of whom were immigrants from Mexico) to communicate in a language other than English, unless it was "a life or death emergency" (Salazar & Fránquiz, 2008, p. 187). Her curriculum and instruction only included superficial aspects of the students' home culture, such as Mexican holidays and customs. The initial pedagogical approach prevented her from connecting with her students and disengaged students from her class. After noticing the negative effects of her initial

approach, the ESL teacher changed her pedagogical practices, welcoming students' interests and their heritage language(s) and culture(s). For example, she inquired into students' topics of personal interest and asked them to research and write about those topics using their prior experiences and their home languages. According to the researchers' observations and teacher's reports, these new practices expanded her Mexican immigrant students' ideas of and engagement in the writing process, in the class, and in the acquisition of English (Salazar & Fránquiz, 2008).

Other studies (Flint, Dollar, & Stewart, 2018; Fránquiz & Salinas, 2013; Gulla, 2015; Kibler, 2019; Skerrett & Bommer, 2013; Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016) concurred in concluding that allowing NLHSs to use their L1 or their full linguistic repertoire during writing processes can enhance their writing engagement and conceptions. In a formative design experiment at a suburban school in the US south, Stewart and Hansen-Thomas (2016) examined how ninth-grade newcomers responded to the invitation to practice *translanguaging* (i.e., strategically mixing multiple languages and discourses) in their English language arts class. The researchers found that the focal newcomer students (n=5; four of whom were Mexican) used both English and Spanish in their writing and oral discussions as means to express creativity and “criticality”—i.e., ability to question and problematize social phenomena based on the use of available evidence (García & Wei, 2014). Stewart & Hansen-Thomas (2016) therefore concluded that “translanguaging facilitate[d] students’ use of higher-order thinking” (p. 467) and that inviting translanguaging into the classroom helped multilingual students better understand how, when, and why to use specific languages or linguistic choices in order to facilitate their learning and communication. Likewise, Flint and collaborators (2018)

showed that when teachers adopted a “translanguaging stance,” allowing their students to draw from all of their languages, newcomer high schoolers (n=12; 10 from Latin America) had more opportunities to effectively participate in writing processes and to complete written assignments. Translanguaging may therefore be a way to improve students’ writing engagement and conceptions.

Moreover, teaching students about their heritage cultures or asking them to research on their home cultures and funds of knowledge improved NLHSs’ writing conceptions and engagement. For example, Fránquiz and Salinas (2013) found that requiring NLHSs (n=11; 7 from Mexico) to draw on their sociopolitical funds of knowledge and to investigate important historical events (some of which involved Latinxs or Chicanxs) through primary sources and document-based questions assisted the students in learning academic writing and developing critical, sociopolitical consciousness. Similarly, Méndez’ (2006) quasi-experimental pretest–posttest action research revealed that the writing skills of Latinx high schoolers (N=108; some of whom were newcomers) improved after they received a transdisciplinary curriculum based on Chicano cultural heritage. Thus, pedagogy and curricula relevant to students’ lives and cultural backgrounds appeared to enhance NLHSs’ writing conceptions and their engagement in both writing tasks and subject learning. Indeed, the burgeoning research on culturally relevant pedagogy (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), and culturally sustaining pedagogy⁷

⁷ For the purposes of these review, I consider the terms culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy as different pedagogical approaches that share the common principles of recognizing students’ cultural background and leveraging their cultural knowledge and experiences. For a discussion of those terms, refer to the work of the cited authors. An in-depth discussion of these terms is beyond the scope of this literature review.

(Paris & Alim, 2017) corroborates the importance of utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy, curriculum, and/or materials.

Leveraging youth's experiences and knowledge into PAR programs.

Because PAR is based on the epistemic belief that coresearchers are experts or essential knowledge bearers, PAR processes center on the youth coresearchers' prior experiences and knowledge. PAR not only offers youth the opportunity to draw on their interests and knowledges (e.g., use of technological tools) but also to create and disseminate knowledge—by conducting their own research projects and sharing their findings and perspectives with multiple audiences (Morrel, 2006, 2007). As youth build on their prior knowledge and experiences in the PAR process through writing, it seems likely that they shift or strengthen a transformational writing conception: They may come to believe that writing is not simply vehicle to convey already known information but rather a way to express and refine their own thoughts and transform people's opinions and their circumstances. However, this point has not been directly proven in the extant literature; it should be examined in future studies.

Offering numerous opportunities to create various types of texts.

Socioculturally-oriented literacy scholars (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath 1982; Scribner & Cole, 1981) would agree on the premise that people's participation in writing activities shape how they conceive writing. People who have multiple, varied opportunities to use writing may have broader conceptions of writing than those who have fewer or more limited opportunities to use writing (Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Scribner & Cole, 1981). The reviewed literature appears to substantiate these claims. In what

follows, I argue that NLHSs need multiple, personally relevant opportunities to compose diverse types of texts in order for them to expand their writing conceptions and that PAR processes offer some of those key writing opportunities.

Crucial writing opportunities for NLHSs.

NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement may shift when they have numerous opportunities to create different types of texts, including multimodal compositions—which are texts that incorporate more than one medium or mode of communication, such as writing plus images or audio (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Lauer, 2009). Jocson's (2010) ethnographic study revealed that when a social studies teacher encouraged her 9th-grade students (most of whom were Latinx) to compose short audiovisual narratives about (im)migration, the students became engrossed in a fluid, nonlinear, and iterative production process in which they learned about writing, technology, history, and culture. Jocson (2012) argued that the different modes of communication (script, sound, and images) allowed the youth to express their ideas in more ways than if they had been restricted to use only written language. Like Jocson (2012), Linares (2017, 2019) found that when immigrant high schoolers were invited to use both written and visual modes of communication to share their lived experiences with teachers, the students became highly engaged in writing and began using writing as a way to not only build relationships with their teachers but also to process their past experiences and “get things off their chests.” Multimodal composing may therefore offer two-way benefits: It allows teachers to get to know their students better and personalize their instructional practices while also encouraging students to view and use writing in new, transformational ways.

Writing opportunities in PAR programs.

Empirical evidence (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; González, 2018; King, 2013; Morrell, 2004, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Romero & Cammarota, 2011; Tate, 2011) suggests that youth co-researchers have numerous writing opportunities at each stage of the PAR process. These studies have shown that, at the beginning of the PAR process, the co-researchers usually dialogue and write notes to choose their focal research issue/topic and the research methods they will use. The coresearchers (individually or in small groups) may then organize and expand their research notes to create a research proposal that examines the issue. While crafting the proposal, the co-researchers use writing to further understand their focal issue and research methods. Once they select their research focus, the coresearchers design data collection instruments (e.g., interview protocols and surveys)—which entails reading, writing, and revising other text-based instruments and their own instruments (González, 2018; King, 2013; Morrell, 2004, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Tate, 2011).

The second PAR phase—i.e., collecting and analyzing data to better understand the problem—also provides numerous writing opportunities to the youth. During data collection, the youth read and write fieldnotes, analysis memos, and interview notes (King, 2013; Morrell, 2004, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Tate, 2011). Then, as they begin analyzing the data, they use writing to keep record of their data and preliminary findings (González, 2018; Noonan, 2009; Tate, 2011).

In the last PAR phase, the co-researchers compose texts to disseminate their study findings. Towards the end of the process, the youth coresearchers compile the data they have collected (e.g., fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and memos) and their preliminary

analyses to create traditional research articles or multimodal compositions (e.g., PowerPoint slides, documentary films, or podcasts) that depict their research studies (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; King, 2013; Morrell, 2004, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Romero & Cammarota, 2011). The coresearchers often share their texts, via oral or written communication, with diverse audiences (e.g., school members, academicians, and policy makers) in order to spur public discussions and social transformations (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; King, 2013; Morrell, 2004, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Romero & Cammarota, 2011). These opportunities to create and share texts may shape how youth coresearchers' conceive writing.

Besides providing the youth coresearchers with opportunities to use writing for research-related purposes, PAR allows the youth to employ writing as a tool for individual expression and reflection. For example, in Morrel and colleagues' PAR programs, the youth wrote journal entries that described their experiences in- and out- of the program as well as created memoirs or personal essays that depicted who they were or who they could become through the PAR process (Morrel, 2008). The creation of those written pieces encouraged the youth to examine –and sometimes shift— their views of themselves and their circumstances (Morrel, 2003, 2008). Thus, it is possible that having opportunities to utilize writing as a tool for individual expression and reflection shapes not only how the youth coresearchers understand themselves and their worlds but also how they conceive and use writing. In other words, participating in activities that require using writing as a tool for expression and reflection may allow the youth to view writing as a way to transform one's understanding and reality, that is, to develop a transformational conception of writing. Nonetheless, researchers have not demonstrated

that giving NLHSs opportunities to create various types of texts shapes their writing conceptions in the same ways as it shapes other youth's conceptions.

Promoting positive relations and interactions between teachers and students.

The reviewed literature indicates that students' relations and interactions with both peers and teachers shape how they conceive and engage with writing. Because my dissertation study sought to have a positive impact on NLHSs' writing conceptions, I focus my research synthesis on the aspects of the interpersonal relations and interactions that researchers have found to enhance NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement. I start this subsection explicating how NLHSs' interactions and relations with both teachers and peers impact their writing engagement and conceptions. I then show how PAR processes help establish optimal relations among the coresearchers (i.e., students and instructors/adult facilitators) and, in doing so, encourage the youth to expand their writing conceptions and engagement. I argue that, by fostering optimal relations among the coresearchers, PAR could enhance NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement.

NLHSs' writing conceptions and interpersonal relations.

NLHSs' interactions with other teenagers, or peers, during writing activities can affect their writing engagement and conceptions. Kibler (2019) noted, for example, that NLHSs frequently discussed with one another the content and form of their own written texts (in both L1 and L2.) These peer interactions, especially when working in small groups, seemed to have helped the students better understand and move along the various stages of the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, and revising), which helped them improve the quality and quantity of their written texts (Kibler, 2019). Similarly,

Straubhaar (2013) discovered that NLHSs at a two-year newcomer program in central Texas established and relied on their *linguistic social capital*, that is, networks of people (especially, classmates) who spoke both their same home language (Spanish) and the target language (English), to comprehend and complete written assignments. Thus, NLHSs may change how they view and approach writing as they interact with their peers.

The literature on NLHSs' writing also suggests that teacher-student relationships and interactions affect how the students conceive and engage with writing. Flint and colleagues (2018), for example, found that NLHSs (n=10) became more devoted and open to writing once they had established a strong, caring relationship with their literacy teachers/tutors. The teachers built those relationships by first getting to personally know each NLHS and connecting with her/him at a personal level. The teachers then showed the NLHSs that they valued them as holistic individuals, not only as learners. The NLHSs built trust in their teachers and acknowledged that the teachers cared about them and what they wrote. This recognition led the NLHSs to increase their engagement in English-language writing activities and to perceive writing as a way to express their ideas creatively (Flint et al., 2018). The caring teacher-student relations may have laid a foundation for NLHSs to develop a transformational conception of writing.

Moreover, building strong relationships with NLHSs may enable teachers to recognize their students' unique strengths, needs, and desires and to provide them with effective writing instruction, which may in turn affect NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement. For instance, Jaffee's (2016) focal teacher, who had positive relationships with his students and was aware of their unique characteristics, knew that his newcomer students needed guidance on how to revise and edit their own writing. As he guided his

students on the revising and editing processes, his NLHSs improved both the quality of their written text and their understanding of writing. By contrast, when teachers do not build close relationships with NLHSs and do not provide them with appropriate writing support, the students often become disengaged from school-based writing activities and strengthen the belief that writing is difficult or irrelevant to their lives (Danzak, 2015; Ek, 2008; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007). It therefore seems as if teacher-student relationships and individualized, academic support, or *scaffolding* (Wood et al., 1976), related to writing can greatly impact NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement.

NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement can also be enhanced through *explicit writing instruction*, or the overt and systematic teaching of writing strategies, processes, and/or structures (Graham & Perin, 2007). Particularly, NLHSs benefit from being explicitly taught grammar, rhetoric, general writing strategies (e.g., brainstorming), and approaches to content-area writing (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2013; Hobbs et al., 2015; Jaffe, 2016; Salazar & Fránquiz, 2008; Skerrett & Bomer, 2013). Learning about and practicing specific types of written texts, such as personal narratives (Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016), poetry (Gilliland, 2015; Gulla, 2015; Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016), and essays (Gilliland, 2015; Jaffe, 2016), may also expand NLHSs' conceptions about writing and increase their writing engagement. To illustrate the impact of writing instruction on NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement, I present two examples and a counter example.

Hobbs et al. (2015) found that students at a newcomer school improved their writing processes and products when their ESL teacher provided them with mini-grammar lessons related to the students' writing processes and explicitly explained how

to examine multimodal texts and revise their own texts and others'. Likewise, Skerrett and Bomer's (2013) focal English teacher helped her NLHSs improve their writing by giving them "numerous mini-lessons on topics such as word choice, audience, dialogue, imagery, punctuation, and characterization" and by directly teaching them how to brainstorm and revise their texts with their classmates.

In stark contrast to Hobbs et al. (2015) and Skerrett and Bomer's (2013) reports, two studies (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) revealed that lack of explicit instruction in writing or rhetoric prevented students from learning rhetoric analysis and advanced academic genres at school. Ortmeier-Hooper (2007) noted, for instance, that her five focal students (three of whom were NLHSs, from El Salvador and Dominican Republic) at two urban high schools only had access to "arhetorical writing instruction"—i.e., "writing instruction that focuses on form and procedure and is absent of any rhetorical considerations such as audience, genre, or purpose (p. 145). These learners also received limited curricula, which overemphasized "survival genres"—those "very basic" textual genres (e.g., five-paragraph essay) geared toward "surviving daily academic life and surviving the tests" (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2007, p. 144). Both the arhetorical writing instruction and narrow curricula, Ortmeier-Hooper (2007) argued, reinscribed these students' social identities as deficient English-language writers and further marginalized them as outside members of the school community. After observing the negative effects of insufficient writing curriculum and instruction on students' writing conceptions and engagement, Ortmeier-Hooper (2007) and Rubinstein-Ávila (2007) advocated for providing NLHSs with explicit writing instruction and rigorous writing curriculum. PAR processes may help establish optimal relationships between students

and instructors and among students and instructors/adult facilitators) and give NLHSs access to individualized, explicit writing instruction, which may incite the youth to expand their writing conceptions and engagement. To this point, I turn next.

Developing interpersonal relations and writing conceptions through PAR.

Through PAR, teachers and students develop strong interpersonal relationships and work together, becoming a unified team of coresearchers (Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2011; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Irizarry, 2008; Morrel, 2006, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Ozer, 2016; Ozer & Wright, 2012). For example, a youth coresearcher who participated in the Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's (2008) PAR project stated:

This [the PAR group] isn't really like a team to me. It's more like a family. You know if you ever need anything you can ask your teammates or your coach. They always have your back. If you are ever really in need or you're really down, someone is there. It's just like a real good support system, especially if you don't have any siblings or if you're not too close with your family. You have someone to lean on and support you, which most people don't have throughout high school. People say all the time to us that they wish they had friends like we have in this program. (p. 86)

As the quote above shows, the support the youth coresearchers receive from both adult facilitators (or teachers) and other teens may contribute to the youth's emotional well-being—because when “[they] are really down, someone is there”— and to their learning processes. In this subsection, I argue that the positive relationships and interactions among students and between teachers and students in PAR processes may

provide youth coresearchers with optimal writing learning experiences and impact their writing conceptions.

In PAR programs, youth coresearchers have numerous opportunities to have text-centered interactions with other teens and, in doing so, they can learn about writing and perhaps shift their writing conceptions. For instance, the youth co-researchers usually collaborate with their peers to create and edit texts that represent their studies (Bocci, 2016; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; García et al., 2015; Irizarry, 2008; King, 2013; Morrel, 2006, 2007; Noonan, 2009). While creating and editing the texts, the youth coresearchers often talk about the writing process in general or about specific aspects of their texts—e.g., how to organize and present data in their texts (Bocci, 2016; Noonan, 2009). And, in some cases, the youth who know more about writing can informally support or instruct other teens involved in the PAR process (King, 2013; Noonan, 2009). Thus, the text-centered, peer interactions may encourage youth coresearchers to conceive and employ writing in new ways.

The youth coresearchers can also obtain crucial writing support from adult facilitators (teachers), who can help them complete writing tasks and change their writing conceptions. During PAR programs, the facilitators work closely with the youth coresearchers and guide them in the writing processes (Bocci, 2016; Cammarota & Romero, 2009, 2011; de los Ríos et al., 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; García et al., 2015; Irizarry, 2008; King, 2013; Kornbluh et al., 2015; LaDuke, 2010; Mirra et al., 2016; Morrel, 2006, 2007; Noonan, 2009; Ozer, 2016; Ozer & Wright, 2012). As the facilitators work on writing activities with the youth, they may provide them with personalized, explicit instruction (King, 2013; Morrel, 2003; Noonan, 2009)—which, as

argued earlier, can have a positive impact on the youth's writing engagement and conceptions.

Chapter Summary & Research Gaps

In sum, the research on NLHSs' writing suggested that NLHSs' conceptions of writing may be reproductive or transformational. Based on my analysis of the literature, PAR can impact NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement through three main ways (or mechanisms)—namely, (a) building on students' prior experiences and knowledge, (b) offering numerous opportunities to create various types of texts, and (c) promoting positive relations and interactions among students and between teachers and students.

Although the literature on NLHSs' writing included intriguing research findings, it had four main shortcomings. First, the literature has paid scant attention to NLHSs' conceptions of writing. Second, just a handful of the reviewed studies (Collazo, 2009; Hobbs et al., 2015; Stewart, 2014) included newcomers from Central American countries and to new destination states, even though many NLHSs come from these countries and settle in new destinations. In fact, most of the reviewed investigations focused on NLHSs from Mexico and were conducted on Latinx immigrants' traditional destinations (e.g., California, Arizona, and New York). Third, little research (e.g., Hobbs et al., 2015) was conducted in programs that aimed at promoting social transformation; hence, we have limited information of how these program influence NLHSs' writing conceptions. Fourth, the reviewed literature largely overlooked the *why* educational programs shaped NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement in specific ways.

The PAR literature had similar limitations. First, scholars commonly utilized pan-ethnic terms (e.g., Latino/a or Hispanic) without examining differences among the ethnic

subgroups (e.g., Salvadoran, Honduran, Dominican, Cuban, etc.). Second, very few of the reviewed studies focused on immigrant youth from Central America. Third, a very small portion of the youth coresearchers in the previous studies were newcomers—most of the teens have been born in the US or lived in the US for most of their lives. Due to these limitations, the existing literature says little about how newcomer youth from Central America participate in PAR programs.

Other research gaps stem from the under-examination of the youth coresearchers' writing during PAR. Though scholars (e.g., Morrell, 2007) have demonstrated that the youth can continuously participate in and learn about writing while doing PAR, we do not have empirical evidence of how PAR impacts newcomer Latinx youth's conceptions and engagement in writing. That is, researchers have not delved into the mechanisms by which PAR shapes (or not) the youth's writing conceptions and engagement.

My dissertation study began to address those research gaps in several ways. First, this research focused on NLHSs' writing conceptions, which have been largely overlooked in the empirical literature. Second, because my study involved NLHSs from Central American countries who are residing in a new destination state (Maryland), I was also able to explore the writing experiences of a subpopulation and a context that have been under-researched. The results of this exploration could help educators better understand how NLHSs' prior experiences migration trajectories, and "contexts of reception" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006) shape their writing conceptions. Third, my investigation may provide insight into the mechanisms by which programs intended to foment personal and social transformation impact (or not) NLHSs' conceptions of writing and their writing engagement. My research may therefore assist educators in the design,

implementation, and evaluation of similar interventions for newcomer youth or Latinx students. I turn next to explain the methodology of my dissertation study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter explains the design and methodology of this dissertation study. I begin with a restatement of the research questions and an overview of the study design, including a rationale for adopting a critical ethnographic approach. I then describe the research site, the study participants, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. I close the chapter discussing validity strategies and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

My dissertation study addressed three research questions:

1. How do NLHSs perceive PAR?
2. How do NLHSs conceive writing before, during, and immediately after participating in a PAR process?
3. What aspects of the PAR processes impact NLHSs' conceptions of writing and how?

Research Design

The study had a “two-tiered design” (Brown, 2010). In the first tier, a group of immigrant high school students (n = 15) and I formed a research team and worked together, as coresearchers, in PAR projects. For the first study tier, the youth coresearchers and I collected data through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and surveys with both students and teachers to better understand their experiences at the newcomer school. Simultaneously, I conducted a qualitative critical inquiry on the writing conceptions and PAR experiences of four focal youth

coresearchers—who were newcomers to the US, self-identified as Latinx, and were enrolled in either tenth or eleventh grades. The critical inquiry was the second study tier and the primary focus of my dissertation.

My dissertation was a critical inquiry because it stemmed from a “critical research worldview” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 59). This view of research stems from Marxist philosophy and relies on two core assumptions: (a) “power relations are everywhere, including the research study itself” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 62) and (b) research is inherently political (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012; Villenas & Foley, 2011). Because my dissertation study rested on those two assumptions, I continuously examined power relations and sought to utilize research as a tool to promote positive sociopolitical changes. As other critical researchers (e.g., Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Madison, 2012; Morrell, 2004; Villenas & Foley, 2011), I worked *with* and *for* marginalized populations (namely, low-income, immigrant Latinx teenagers) to create empirically-based knowledge that could support them in taking social actions and improving their social conditions (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Madison, 2012).

More specifically, I drew on *critical ethnography*, a research approach that requires doing prolonged, systematic fieldwork and aims to produce “focused, well-theorized accounts of a particular institution or subgroup that reveal oppressive relations of power” (Villenas & Foley, 2011, p. 196). I selected critical ethnography because I aspired to create a rich, theoretically-grounded description and analysis of how the focal Central American, newcomer, high schoolers used writing and research to exert their

power and transform their school. Unlike traditional ethnographers, I did not attempt to produce universalizing portraits of whole cultures (e.g., the Latinx culture).

Following critical ethnographers' suggestions (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012; Villenas & Foley, 2011), I used ethnographic methods (i.e., participant observation, extensive interviewing, and cultural artifact analysis) as tools to collect and analyze data concerning the youth's cultural practices and products as well as the power relations and the social changes that occurred in and because of the PAR program. I expound on the selected research methods in the subsections below. But, before, I provide a detailed description about the research context and the coresearchers to situate my study and its goals (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Research Context

The study occurred at Multicultural High, a public, newcomer high school near the Washington DC metropolitan area. The school is not located in inner Washington DC, but it is close to the city boundaries. Multicultural High is a by-product of the migration waves of Central Americans to the DC metropolitan area.

There have been four major migration waves of Central Americans to the DC area. The first large wave of Central American immigrants—two thirds of whom were women— arrived to DC between 1960s and 1970s (Repak, 1995). During that time, employees of the US government and of international agencies who lived in DC recruited Central American women to work for them as housekeepers and child-care providers (Repak, 1995). The first groups of Central American immigrants laid the foundations of the social networks that eventually expedited the migration and settlement of the following waves of Central Americans into the Washington area (Repak, 1995). The

second wave of Central American began in the 1980s, when the civil wars of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua forced large numbers of Central Americans to emigrate from their home countries to the US, especially to the DC area (O'Connor et al., 2019; Repak, 1995). The third Central American migration wave roughly started in the mid-1990s, after most of the Central American civil wars officially ended (O'Connor et al., 2019; Repak, 1995). The latest wave of immigrants generally left their home countries to escape from violence, corruption, limited economic opportunities, and natural disasters – e.g., the January 2001 El Salvador Earthquake and Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998, and drought conditions (O'Connor et al., 2019; Rosenblum & Ball, 2016). A large portion of the recent Central American immigrants choose to settle in the DC area because they have ties to relatives and communities in the region (Rosenblum & Ball, 2016).

Currently, the DC metropolitan area has the third largest population of foreign-born Central Americans in the US—only surpassed by Los Angeles and New York (Lesser & Batalova, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2019). In 2017, the Central American immigrant population in the Washington DC area (which includes the country's capital and parts of Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia) was 293,000, that is, 4.8% of the metro area population (Lesser & Batalova, 2017).

Multicultural High is part of a school district neighboring Washington DC. The district reflects the shifting population demographics and the Central American migration patterns. As of 2018, the racial/ethnic make-up of the district is: 62% African American, 17 % Latinx, 13% Caucasian, 4% Asian, and 4% other races/ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

In the state where Multicultural High is located the Latinx student population has increased 185.4% since 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Due in part to those demographic trends, the state (with the support of educational foundations and a Latinx advocacy non-profit organization) opened Multicultural High and another newcomer high school in the school district with the largest proportion of immigrant teenagers.

Rationale for Research Site Selection

I selected Multicultural High for several reasons. First, the school is focused on serving newcomer students and has a significant population of emergent English-Spanish bilingual high schoolers, who are the focal population of this study. Second, since its opening (in the 2015-2016 academic year), the school has partnered with researchers to examine various aspects of the school and its community. Hence, part of the ethos of the school is conducting and using research to enhance the educational opportunities for immigrant youth—which is the *raison d'être* of my dissertation study. Third and most importantly, I have been building relationships with Multicultural High its students and staff for over two years.

In Fall 2016, I became part of a university-based research team focused on examining Multicultural High students' immigrant stories (see Martin-Beltrán, García & Montoya-Ávila, 2018, for more details on that study.) At that time, I began visiting the school and serving as a researcher and occasional tutor. Since then, I have taken other informal roles at the school (e.g., student mentor and translator for parents and students) and continued interacting with Multicultural High students, parents, and staff. I have also tutored Multicultural High students at an afterschool program at a community center near

the school. Through those various interactions, I had established rapport and positive relationships with several students, teachers, administrators, and families. These relationships facilitated my access to the school and helped me gain support from the school community to carry out my program and study.

Multicultural High has a diverse student population. Multicultural High students currently represent 24 countries and one US territory; however, nearly two-thirds of the students come from El Salvador or Guatemala. The students speak a wide variety of home languages (e.g., Spanish, Farsi, Chinese), but the majority (87%) of students speak Spanish at home. Twelve percent of students are categorized as Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). Around 95.0% of the students are both labeled as ELLs and are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Participants

The afterschool program involved a group of 15 Multicultural High students but, on average, only 5 students attended per session (the reasons for the lack of consistent student attendance are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). I recruited the students by posting recruitment flyers on the school walls, presenting the program in the ELA class to all the 10th and 11th graders, asking teachers and administrators to refer me to students who may be interested in the project, and reaching out to some Multicultural High students who I already knew. When interested students contacted me (via phone, email, or face-to-face—when I was at the school), I asked them to meet with me in small groups or individually at the school to review the research team (RT) expectations and afterschool program curriculum (see Appendix A), described study procedures, and explained the assent and consent forms (see Appendices B, C, D, E, F, G, and H.) To participate in the

program as co-researchers, the youth had to: (a) be students at Multicultural High, (b) commit to attend the weekly afterschool program sessions, and (c) be interested in learning about research. Throughout the project, each coresearcher—including myself—could take the roles of researcher, learner/student, and teacher, depending on our circumstances and funds of knowledge.

Among the youth coresearchers, I selected four focal students based on five additional criteria: (a) self-identify as Latinx, (b) have arrived to the United States four years (or less) before the beginning of the program, (c) be enrolled in either 10th or 11th grade at the beginning of my dissertation study, (d) have attended all or most of the program sessions, and (e) submit a signed assent form and/or a signed consent form. If they were 18 years of age or older, they signed a consent form (see Appendices B and C). Or, if they were under the age of 18, they signed an assent form (Appendix D and E) and asked their parents/guardians to sign a consent form in which the guardians agreed to allow them to participate in the afterschool program and the research study (Appendices F and G). Youth coresearchers who did not submit the respective signed assent or consent forms were not be considered focal study participants.

I decided to focus on this student population for three reasons. First, youth in late-secondary grades (e.g., 10th and 11th graders) may be “better able than younger students to meet the social, intellectual, and commitment demands of the [PAR] project” (Brown, 2010, p. 6). Second, I wished to center on students who could continue studying at the school a year after the beginning of the program so that I could ask them to engage in “member checks” once I finished analyzing all the study data. Third, I concentrated on

coresearchers who submitted signed consent/assent forms to ensure compliance with IRB requirements.

In addition to the youth coresearchers, I enlisted the two Multicultural High teachers. One of them taught “general English” to 11th graders and “advanced placement English” for 10th/11th graders; the other teacher taught “Spanish for native speakers” to 11th grade students. The teachers were familiar with the focal youth’s writing. Both teachers voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and gave me a signed a consent form (see Appendix H.) The two participating educators provided me with information that helped me better understand the focal youth’s current writing experiences at the school and ideas about writing. The teacher-provided information therefore formed part of the background of the study, rather than its main focus. I provide a more detailed description of each study participant in what follows.

Focal youth coresearchers.

All the youth coresearchers were from Central America (namely, Honduras and El Salvador). Although their life experiences differed, they all had been at some point separated from their parents and had migrated to the US during their late teen years. By the end of the study, all of them had turned 18 years old and dreamed of going to college after high school. Table 1 presents the focal youth’s key demographic information.

Table 1. *Focal Youth's Demographic Information*

Participant	Place of Birth	Length of residence in the US (before program)	Age (beginning of the program)	Grade
Andrés	San Salvador, El Salvador	3 years, 3 months	17	11 th
Nany	Tocoa, Honduras	11 months	18	10 th /11 th
Pamela	Choluteca, Honduras	2 years, 4 months	18	11 th
Teresa	San Salvador, El Salvador	3 years, 5 months	17	11 th

*Andrés*⁸.

Andrés was an 18-year-old young Salvadorian man with a big smile and deep thoughts. He was born and raised in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. In San Salvador, he lived with his parents and his younger brother and attended elementary (for 6 years) and middle school (for 2 years). In December 2015, when he was 15 years old, he migrated with his mother to the US in search of better life opportunities. Their original plan was that, once Andrés and his mother settled down, the other two members of the family would join them in the US; however, Andrés' mother died in a car accident soon after they arrived to the US and their plan fell through. Andrés stayed in the US, living with his aunts and cousins, and his father and brother remained in San Salvador. Although Andrés' mother's death deeply affected him, he tried to avoid showing his emotions to his family members and instead tried to be a source of strength and support for them.

⁸ All participant names are self-selected pseudonyms,

Soon after arriving to the US, Andrés enrolled in a predominantly Latinx middle school where mainly had “good experiences.” Upon his graduation from middle school, he transferred to Multicultural High. In his first year at Multicultural High, he reported being a “difficult student” who “did not do homework or anything” (Formal interview #1, February 19, 2019). During this time, he shared, he felt lonely and full of negative emotions—associated with his mother’s death and his separation from his father and brother. And, because he “did not want to bother anybody with [his] stuff,” he decided to deal with his “stuff by himself: he began writing about how he felt and about his goals for the future. These emotional writing experiences (further discussed in the Findings Chapter) helped him decide that he should strive to become a “better student” and a role model for his younger brother. By the time I met Andrés, he had stopped engaging in emotional writing because he “no longer needed it” (Formal interview #1, February 19, 2019). In his junior year of high school, he had developed “very good relationships” with his teachers and was actively trying to improve his school grades. He reported putting “a lot of effort” on his school assignments, which he often completed late in the evening or in the wee hours of the morning, after coming back home from working part-time (5:30-9:30 PM) as an office cleaner. At the beginning of the program, he was very interested in understanding what motivated teachers to help students succeed in school. He was planning to pursue a college degree in social work and, eventually, get a job in which he could help young children.

Nany.

Nany was a skinny, 18-year-old young woman with long, brown, curly hair, and shiny, brown eyes. She described herself as friendly person who liked helping people but

who had a short-temper (Nany, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). She was born in Honduras (in the city council of Tocoa, department of Colón) and was raised there by her maternal grandmother. She attended “very good” Honduran public schools, where she took advanced classes of Spanish language and technology. In March 2018, when she was about to graduate from high school, she migrated from Honduras to the US to reunite with her mother. After going through a treacherous migration journey and spending a month in a “casa hogar” (a detention center for underage immigrants) in Texas, she moved into a small apartment with her mother, step-father, step-brother and other seven people (some of whom were extended family members.) By the beginning of the study, Nany had lived in the US for less than a year; she was the most recent immigrant among the group of focal co-researchers.

Nany struggled to adjust to her new life in the US. She greatly missed her grandmother and younger sister, who stayed in Honduras. And, she often had arguments with her mother and her step-father, with whom she did not getting along. Moreover, she shared, it was hard for her to communicate in English and get used to the US school system. In the US, she was held back a couple of school grades; she was not a high school senior (as she used to be in Honduras) but a sophomore—she was formally enrolled in 10th grade but was taking several advanced, 11th grade classes. However, Nany did her best at school and tried to take advantage of all the educational opportunities she received at Multicultural High. She hoped to graduate soon from high school and pursue a bachelor’s degree in computer science or graphic design, which were some of her main passions. During the program, Nany focused on studying what made sad or depressed teenager students like her.

Pamela.

Pamela was an 18-year-old Honduran young woman who usually wore long skirts and dresses. She appeared to be very serious and quiet, but she considered herself “joyful, friendly and a little funny” (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). Pamela grew up in Choluteca, a city in southern Honduras, with her maternal grandparents and her two sisters (one was three years older and the other one year younger than her.) By 2016, when Pamela was 15 years old, her grandmother’s health had deteriorated, and she could not take care of the three sisters anymore. For that reason, Pamela’s mother—who had been living in the US for over 10 years—decided that it was time for her two younger daughters to come to the US to live with her. Neither Pamela nor her sister had any say in the decision. In November 2016, Pamela and her sister began living in the US with their mother, stepfather, and 3-year-old half-brother.

Pamela’s lifestyle changed when she came to the US and she disliked the changes. She said that in Honduras she had “less responsibilities and more freedom” than in the US, where she had to follow her mother’s strict rules, take care of her younger brother, and work to “buy her own stuff” (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). Pamela’s life as a student was also different in the US: Whereas in her former Honduran school she knew all the students and got along well with most of them, in the first US school she attended she struggled to communicate and bond with her classmates. She disliked that first US school so much that she pleaded to her mother to transfer her to another school, Multicultural High. Although in Multicultural High she “felt better” and talked to more peers than in the other US school, she still reported having difficulties communicating in English and making friends. But she did not like sharing her personal

struggles with anybody. Whenever she had a difficulty, she only talked and prayed to god. She spent most of her free time in religious activities (e.g., Bible studies sessions). During these activities, she communicated, read, and wrote in Spanish. Before the program, she had never written about her emotions or problems.

Pamela joined the program because she wanted to “know what people think” and “share her opinions with others” (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). She was interested in going to college and learning about photography, but her mother had discouraged her from both. Her mother suggested that she focused instead on working and earning money. In the PAR program, Pamela explored how people reacted to unexpected life changes (namely, being forced to migrate to a new country) and used photography and videography to represent her findings.

Teresa.

Teresa was one of the most outgoing members of the group. She described herself as a “very nice, hard working person” who liked “helping others” (Teresa, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). For most of her childhood and early adolescence, Teresa lived in a “high crime” neighborhood of the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador. When Teresa was seven years old, her mother was the victim of a horrific physical attack and had to move to the US. Teresa and her two sisters (one two years older and the other three year younger than her) remained in El Salvador with their maternal grandmother. Sadly, Teresa’s grandmother physically and psychologically abused her for several years, until her aunt decided to take care of her and her sisters. In September 2015, when Teresa was about to turn 15 years old, she asked her mother not to give her a quinceañera party but to rather pay for her and her sisters’ trip to the US.

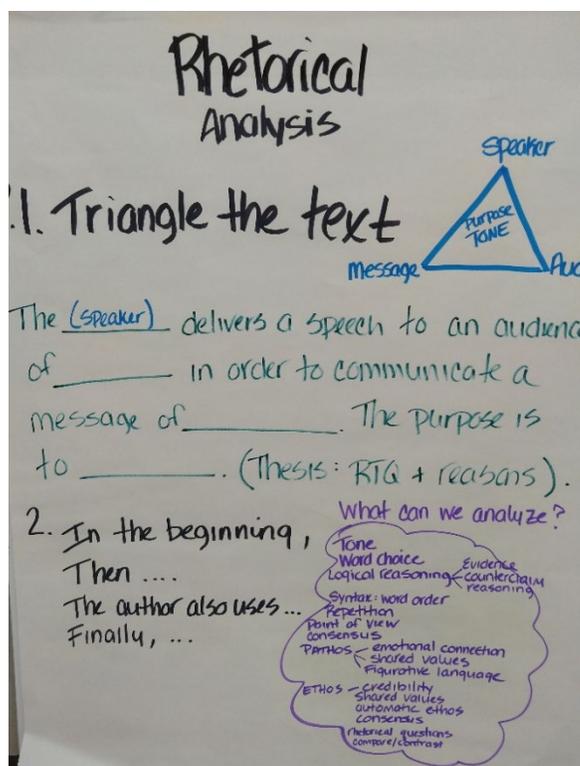
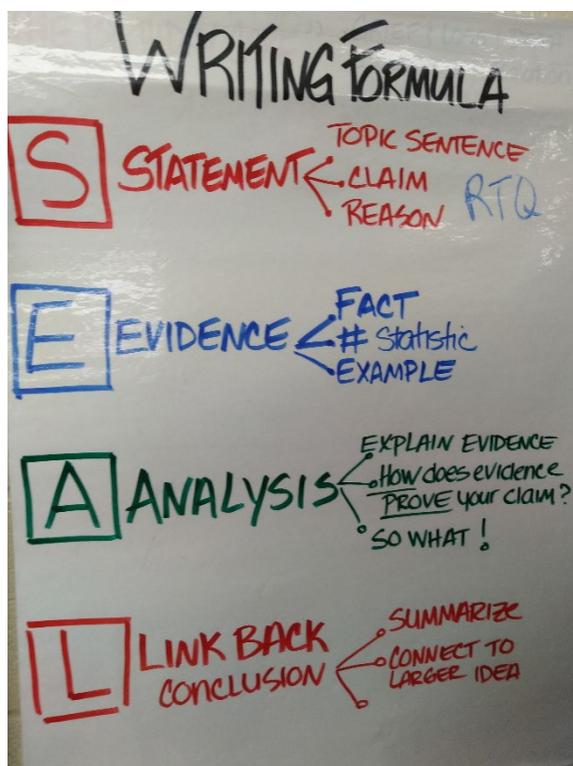
At the end of October 2015, Teresa and her sisters happily reunited their mother in the US. Teresa then attended a middle school in the Washington DC metropolitan area where she had great support from her teachers. Indeed, it was one of her middle school teachers who first talked to her about Multicultural High, describing it as “a very good school for students who are learning English as a second language” (Teresa, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). Following the teacher’s recommendation, Teresa enrolled in that high school as a freshman. At Multicultural High, she developed excellent relationships with both teachers and students and became involved in multiple groups and activities (e.g., tennis team, student government association, and legal debate team). Given Teresa’s positive relationships with her teachers, it was not surprising to me that she wanted to investigate teachers through the PAR program. By the end of the program, Teresa was planning to become a public health professional in order to help others and advocate for low-income people’s access to high-quality health care.

Teachers.

Ms. Arguer.

Ms. Arguer was a serious, yet caring teacher whose family had migrated from Italy to the US several generations ago. She spoke Italian fluently and could understand Spanish to some extent. Before becoming a teacher (five years before the study), she was a successful businesswoman who had received a bachelor’s degree in Communications and Public Relations and two master’s degrees, one in business and another one in secondary education. At the time of the study, she had been working at Multicultural High for two years; she was teaching English language arts (ELA) to 11th grade students and advanced placement ELA to a mix of 10th and 11th grade students. The assignments

of her classes usually revolved around argumentative writing. For example, she assigned students a controversial topic (e.g., vaping or sexual harassment) and asked students to write an essay justifying their position on the topic. To support students' learning of writing, she taught students rhetorical analysis and provided them with "writing formulas," phrases and mnemonics that helped students "organize their ideas" and learn how to write compelling texts (Ms. Arguer, Formal interview #1, February 27, 2019). For example, Ms. Arguer taught students how to use a writing formula called SEAL and the rhetorical triangle (depicted in the two pictures below) to compose and then analyze their own texts.



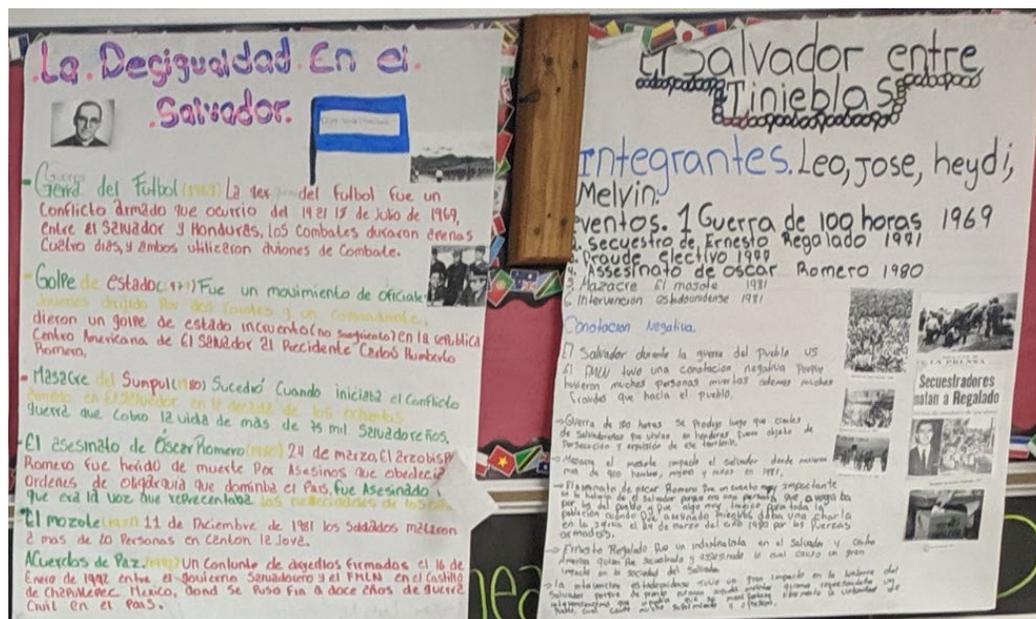
Mr. Johannes de Silentio.

The Spanish teacher, Mr. Silentio, was born in Colombia and raised in the US.

Before becoming a teacher, he had obtained a bachelor's degree in anthropology and

worked as youth program coordinator for a Latinx advocacy, non-profit organization. He began working as a teacher a year before my study, when he joined the Multicultural High faculty team. Mr. Silentio had little formal training in teaching Spanish, but he was an avid reader of pedagogical, philosophical, and Latin American literary work.

In the writing assignments of his intermediary-level classes of Spanish for native speakers (in which most youth coresearchers were enrolled), Mr. Silentio often prompted students to discuss their life experiences and/or sociohistorical events concerning their home countries. For example, before the beginning of my study, Mr. Silentio asked his students to look up information on the Internet about key historic events in their home countries and synthesize the information on a hand-written poster. Two student-created posters are depicted below.



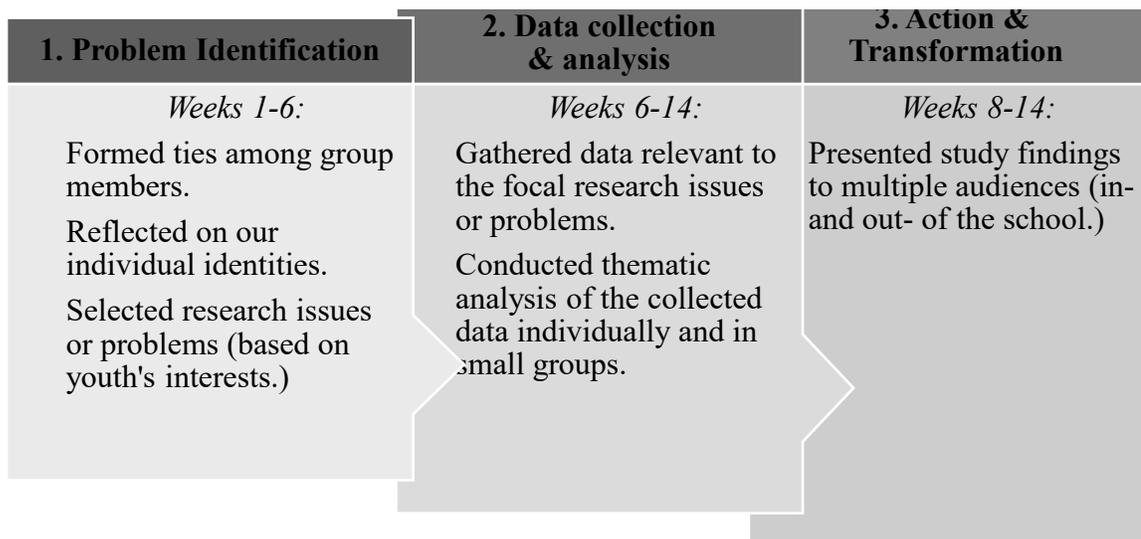
The PAR Program

The program was based on the PAR principles discussed in Chapter 2 and had two overarching goals: (a) to improve NLHSs' writing experiences and (b) to promote both students' conscientization and social transformation. Consistent with PAR principles, the group of coresearchers (NLHSs and I) worked together in *all* the research phases—namely, (1) problem identification, (2) data collection and analysis, and (3) implementation of strategic actions that helped address our research problems and transform knowledge and practices. I organized the PAR process around those three overlapping phases.

The program included 14 weekly sessions in the afterschool hours; each session lasted 3 hours (from 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM.) Phase 1 lasted 6 weeks and focused on team building research training, and problem identification. At the beginning of the first phase, the youth researchers and I engaged in whole-group activities, such as sharing our stories about our immigration and schooling trajectories, that helped us (re)form interpersonal bonds.

We then discussed main ethical issues in social research and research approaches (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods.) I taught the youth strategies for research design and encouraged them to complete the online CITI course on Social and Behavioral Research. The Phase 1 curriculum is available in Appendix A. Figure 2 represents the PAR phases.

Figure 2. Phases of the PAR program



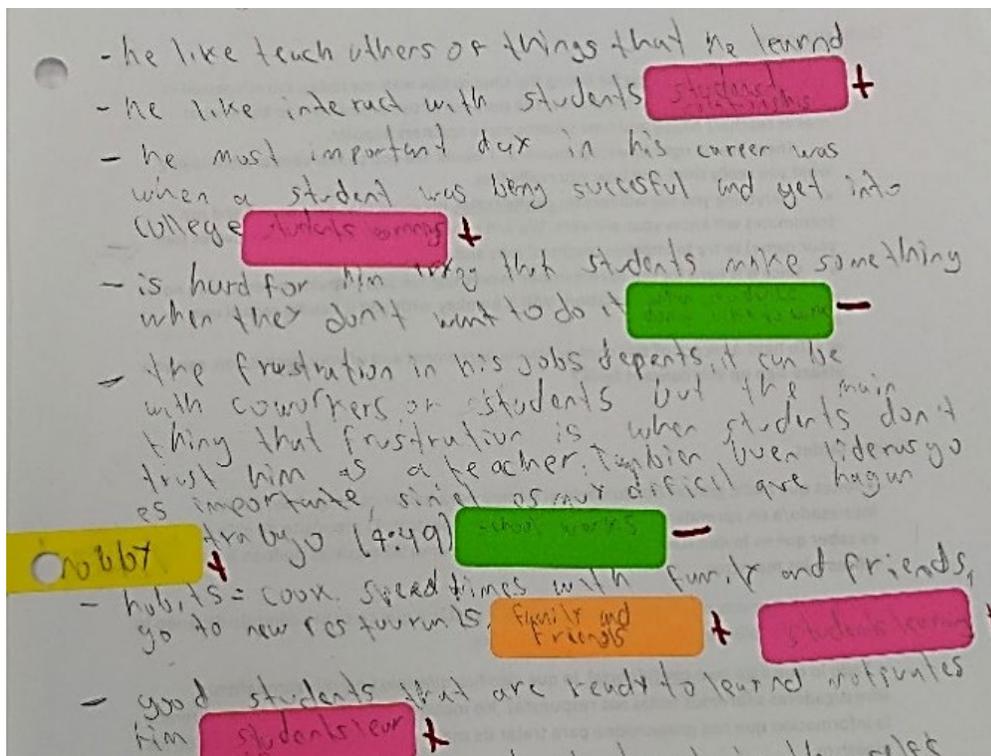
Based on their personal reflections and our whole group discussions the youth coresearchers came up with school-related topics, issues, or problems that they wanted to investigate, using the research methods we had learned in the program. A group of teenaged coresearchers who had personally struggled with “deep sadness” or depression became interested in understanding what causes students’ sadness and how could others help them reduce their sadness. Nany was part of this first group. Another group, led by Andrés and Teresa, wanted to learn more about teachers’ emotional well-being and their support to students because they had personally benefited from having received teachers’ academic and emotional support. This second group eventually decided to focus on the question of what makes teachers happy. Other teens like Pamela decided to work on their own, though they received help from other youth and me whenever they requested it; that is, they could still count on having the support of a research team. Because Pamela was forced to migrate to the US, she opted to study immigrant people’s reactions to

unexpected or undesired changes (namely, moving to a new country.) She wished to find ways to help youth immigrants, like herself, adjust to a life in a new country.

During Phase 2, the youth coresearchers and I refined the main research questions, data collection methods, and analytic strategies. All the groups chose to conduct qualitative studies and collect data through semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The sadness group collected data from 10 students; the happiness gathered data from 10 teachers; the changes group collected data from immigrant adolescents (Multicultural High students and youth's friends) and adults (school teachers and relatives.) As the youth and I collected the data, I guided them (individually and in their small research groups) on how to organize and code data by hand.

An example of the youth's hand coding is available in the picture below. The depicted document is a teen's analysis of a teacher interview. This analysis formally began when—upon my request—the teen wrote down on his journal the interview fragments that he thought might answer his team's main research question (i.e., “what makes teachers happy?”). I then discussed with him and his teammates how we could characterize and group the fragments he had written. We came up with labels (or codes) that summarized the fragments, the things or people (e.g., “hobbies” and “students”) that teachers said made them happy. Subsequently, I asked the teen to write down the codes in colorful sticky labels and to paste next to each fragment its corresponding label. After he did that, his team and I started looking at commonalities (or patterns) among the codes. We noticed that there were some things that made teachers happy and others that made them unhappy. We decided to label the former as “positive” (or +) and the latter as

“negative” (or -). We later used those two main groups (or categories) and the subgroups (codes) to organize their research findings.



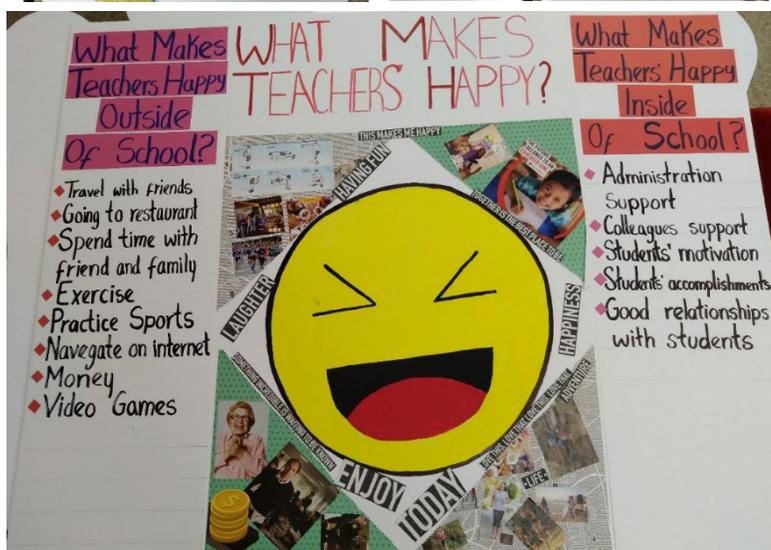
After they began noticing patterns in the data and organizing the findings, I invited them to create a text that summarized their study. In the sixth program session, I explained to the youth that researchers can represent their studies in various “ways” (“maneras”), depending on their intended goals and audience(s). Commonly, I said, researchers represent their studies through written texts, such as research articles, that include five main sections: study title, introduction, methods, findings, and conclusion. I dubbed those texts “traditional.” I then went on to explicate that there were other, “alternative” texts (e.g., videos, presentation slides, and conference-style posters), which combined writing with other “modes of communication” (namely, images) and which

could appear on “surfaces” other than paper⁹. I then showed them examples of what I called “traditional texts” and “alternative texts” that I or other researchers have used to represent our studies. I prompted the youth to identify the affordances and constrains of each type of text and to discuss how different people could react or interpret those texts. Subsequently, I suggested that they made a traditional or an alternative text that symbolized their study to themselves and to others.

Each research team created two alternative texts. The teacher happiness made two posters: One hand-made poster listed their main findings and illustrated them with a hand-made collage centered on a smiley emoji; the other one was a computer-designed, conference-style poster that included the sections of a traditional research-based article. Like the happiness group, the student sadness team created a conference-style poster on the computer. They also crafted a hand-painted book box that depicted images related to students’ sadness (e.g., a broken heart and a person “drowning” in loneliness) and that included, in small pieces of paper, the causes of students’ sadness (e.g., getting bullied)

⁹ I am grateful to Dr. Rossina Zamora Liu for her suggestion of incorporating alternative, multimodal texts (e.g., comics, spoken word poetry, and keep sake book boxes)

and some “suggestions to reduce students’ sadness” (e.g., give them attention). The pictures of the book box and the posters are included below.



What makes teachers happy?

Introduction: Research Problem

- We wanted to investigate what make teachers happy and why some teachers become unhappy.
- This issue is important because teachers' emotions affect how they teach, which could affect students' learning.
 - For example, when a teacher is happy, s/he sometimes motivates students who don't like school to do something in class because they have fun and feel comfortable in that class.

Methods

For our qualitative study, we interviewed 10 IHSLP teachers:

- **Gender:**
 - 5 women
 - 5 men

- **Classes taught:**

- English
- History
- Technology
- Social Studies
- Biology
- Music
- Spanish
- Math



Findings

What makes teachers happy?

Inside of school:

- Administration's support.
- Colleagues' support and collaboration.
- Students' motivation.
- Students' accomplishments.
- Good relationships with students.
- Students participation

Outside of school:

- Travelling with friends.
- Going to restaurants.
- Spending time with friends and family.
- Exercising or practicing sports.
- Browsing the internet.
- Having a good salary.
- Playing video games.

Why do some teachers become unhappy?

Inside of school:

- Pessimistic students.
- Lack of students' motivation.
- Students' personal problems.
- Minimum work from other teachers

Outside of school:

- Lack of contact with family and friends.

Conclusion

Teachers' happiness depends on different factors, such as students, colleagues, school administration, and family. Teachers need support and collaboration from students, co-workers, school administration and family members in order to be happy.

Recommendations:

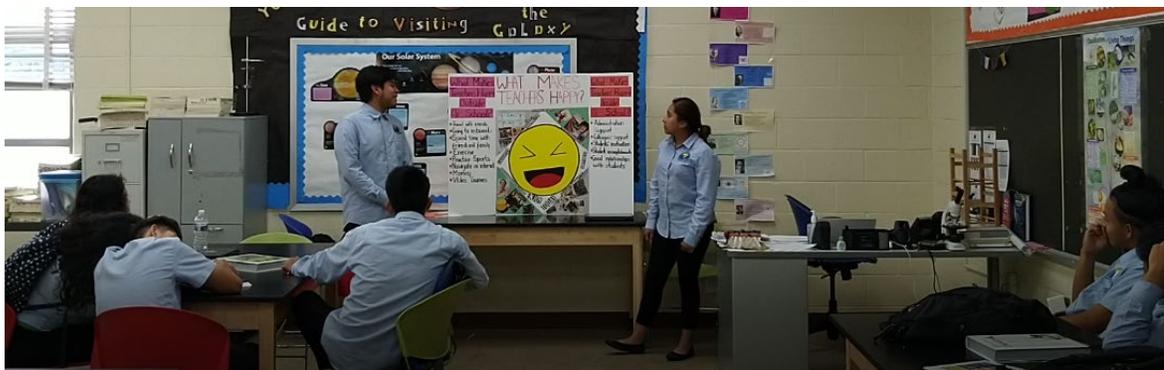
- Administrators should listen to what teachers say and support them.
- Teachers should have space and time to have fun.
- Teachers should build a good relationship with one another.
- Students should complete their assignments on time.
- Students should improve their attitude towards learning and towards teachers. When students' attitude changes, students learn more and teachers are happier.



The group studying unwanted changes created a short-story/script (based on interviewees' actual responses) about an immigrant student who was forced to move to a new country and who struggled to adjust to her new life in a new country; that group used the story/script to produce a "short movie." I helped the teams in the text creation process by giving them "design tips," suggestions on how to make their texts clearer or more compelling to the youth's intended audiences.

Lastly, in the action phase of our PAR process, we presented our research findings—using the texts we had created—to the rest of the school community and to educators outside of the school who worked (or planned to work) with immigrant youth. The youth coresearchers chose to do these presentations because, as discussed in the findings chapter, they wished to share the information they had gathered with people who may need it or may find it "helpful" (namely, immigrant youth and teachers of immigrant youth.)

To fulfill the youth's wishes, I—in collaboration with the principal and his assistant—organized two "research talks" for the school administrators, teachers, and students. In each talk, the youth coresearchers briefly described their study, shared their study findings (with the support of the multimodal texts they had created), and made suggestions related to their research topics. We also went to several classrooms—as shown in the picture below—to present our studies to teachers and students who were not able to attend the cafeteria talks; we did these presentations in Spanish, English, or Spanglish (depending on what our audiences preferred.) And, as a "reminder" of our research to the school community, we pasted the youth's posters on the school walls.



The youth and I also presented our research work at two higher education institutions. We presented the preliminary findings of our research on teacher happiness at the University of Maryland, in an undergraduate-level class on the Northern Triangle, taught by Dr. Ana Patricia Rodríguez. In addition, we presented our research studies at regional conference for ESOL teachers—many of whom worked with NLHSs. In general, the responses of the school community to our presentations were very positive; the attendees were usually interested in our studies and asked us questions about our work at the end of our presentations. The youth’s interactions with the attendees played an important role in the youth’s perceptions of PAR and of writing. I will explain this point in depth in the findings chapter.

Role of the Facilitator-Researcher

I took two main roles in the PAR program: project facilitator and researcher. Although the line between these two roles was blurry at times (Kelly, 2008), I tried to distinguish between the roles of facilitator/practitioner and researcher to provide a clearer depiction of what each entailed. As a project facilitator, I created and implemented the program curriculum—which meant training the youth in research methods and guiding them during research and writing processes.

I provided the youth co-researchers with explicit writing instruction via “mini-lessons.” The instruction focused on issues relevant to the writing process (e.g., strategies for brainstorming and text revision) and to strategic language use (or translanguaging) in writing products. I did not give abstract writing lectures but rather showed the youth concrete ways to assess and perhaps improve their own written products. These writing mini-lessons were therefore embedded in the youth’s writing experiences and processes. I opted for taking this personally relevant, concise, and direct approach to writing instruction because, as discussed in Chapter 3, prior research (e.g., Skerrett & Boomer, 2013; Stewart & Hansen, 2016) indicated that this instructional approach may enhance NLHSs’ writing conceptions.

As a researcher, I took the stance of a critical ethnographer to examine the focal youth coresearchers’ writing conceptions and engagement. This stance involved conducting participant observation and ethnographic interviews, taking copious field notes of students’ conceptions of and engagement in writing during the program, recognizing the connections between their writing and the social contexts in which they inhabit, and constantly reflecting on my own positionality (or my social positions in relation to the study participant) and actions.

Clearly, my social position and background influenced my dissertation study. As many students at Multicultural High, I was born and raised in a Latin American country. Like some of them, I grew up in a low-income family, pursued education *para salir adelante*, and migrated to the US dreaming of a better future. My belief on the transformational power of education and my experiences as a Latina immigrant and educator undergird and propel this study. Yet, I also acknowledged that my personal

stakes in the study and differences between my current social position (as a middle-class, university-based researcher) may impact the kind of relationship I forged with the study participants and perhaps blinded me to some issues or facts. I aimed to address those potential problems and increase trustworthiness by utilizing several strategies (detailed at the end of this chapter.)

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval for this study and going through the respective consent/assent process with the study participants and their guardians (if they were under the age of 18, at the time of data collection), I began gathering anonymized data from the focal youth coresearchers and the two teachers. Data collection included semi-structured interviews with the youth coresearchers and teachers, participant observations, demographic surveys, analytic memos, and artifacts (namely, texts) used or created by the youth coresearchers. In what follows, I describe each data collection method and explain how the resulting data sources helped me address the research questions. To have an overview the relation between research questions and data sources, see Table 2.

Table 2. *Data Collection*

Data collection method	Main Participants	Data collection instrument	Time of data collection	Resulting data sources & amount of data	Timeframe for collection	RQs addressed with these data
Participant observation	Focal youth coresearchers (n=4)	Observation protocol (Appx O)	Weekly (during each program session)	Fieldnotes (14); audio recordings (14)	March-July	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Formal Interviews	Focal youth coresearchers (n=4)	Interview Protocol for youth (Appx N)	Before and after the program (2 interviews per participant)	Interview transcripts (8) and audio recordings (8)	March-July	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3

Data collection method	Main Participants	Data collection instrument	Time of data collection	Resulting data sources & amount of data	Timeframe for collection	RQs addressed with these data
Formal Interviews	Teachers (n=2)	Interview Protocol for teachers (Appx L)	Before and after the program (2 interviews per participant)	Interviews transcripts (4) and audio recordings (4)	March-July	RQ3 & background
Survey	Teachers (n=2) and focal youth coresearchers (n=4)	Demographic survey for teachers (Appx K) and youth (Appx M)	Beginning of study	Survey responses (n=6)	March	[participant background]
Artifact collection	Focal youth coresearchers (n=4)	Journal entries (Appx P) and students' multimodal compositions	Throughout the program	Student-created texts; students' journal entries	March-July	RQ2, RQ3, & background

Participant observation.

Central to ethnographic work is participant observation and extensive written documentation of these observations (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2014). To be consistent with the ethnographic approach of this study, I engaged in continuous participant observation and took copious field notes of students' conceptions of writing and research during the program. More specifically, I observed the youth coresearchers as they engaged in program activities and talked about writing and research during the program. I documented my observations through detailed fieldnotes. For the fieldnotes, I followed a basic observation protocol (see Appendix I). My observations especially focused on the youth coresearchers' actions, comments, questions, and reflections concerning writing and research. Through the observations, I also attempted to explore issues raised during the interviews with both students and teachers. To supplement my observations and notes on the program sessions, I audio recorded each session.

Interviews.

Interviewing is a hallmark of qualitative research in general, and ethnographic work in particular (Madison, 2012). During my dissertation study, I performed two types of interviews—*informal conversational interviews* and *interview guide approach* (Patton, 2002)—with all study participants (i.e., youth coresearchers and teachers). All the interview data were anonymized.

The informal conversational interviews resembled casual, friendly, unstructured conversations and included questions related to the immediate situation and to my research study (Patton, 2002). I conducted myriad informal interviews with both participating teens and teachers. Sometimes, I recorded parts of these interviews, with the participants' permission, and transcribed the audios verbatim. On other occasions, I took notes after the conversations had ended.

In other interviews, I followed an interview guide approach. That is, before the interviews, I created a detailed questionnaire that included specific topics, issues, and questions related to my research questions (Patton, 2002). I then utilized the questionnaire as guide for my conversations with the participants. All the guided, semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews occurred in the school, at time that was convenient for the participants. With each research participant, I conducted two guided interviews (one at the beginning and one at the end of the program).

The guided, semi-structured interviews with teachers and youth differed in their focus and purpose. The teacher interviews concentrated on the writing activities the teachers implemented in their classes and on the teachers' perceived effect of the

program on youth coresearchers' writing (see Appendix J). The teacher interviews—which were conducted in English, the primary language of the two faculty—provided background information on the focal youth's current writing experiences at the school and helped identify the aspects of the PAR process that impacted the focal youth's writing conceptions (RQ3). The interviews with the youth coresearchers, on the other hand, centered on their conceptions of writing and research as well as on their previous writing and research experiences (see Appendix K). The youth interviews were quintessential to answer the three core research questions; these interviews allowed me to gather their views on the PAR process (RQ1), their writing conceptions (RQ2), and their perceived impact of PAR on their writing conceptions (RQ3). And, in the last semi-structured interview, I also requested and obtained the youth's feedback on my preliminary findings, which helped me strengthen my study. The student interviews were conducted in Spanish, the language that the youth preferred, and in the presence of a student-trusted peer or school faculty member.

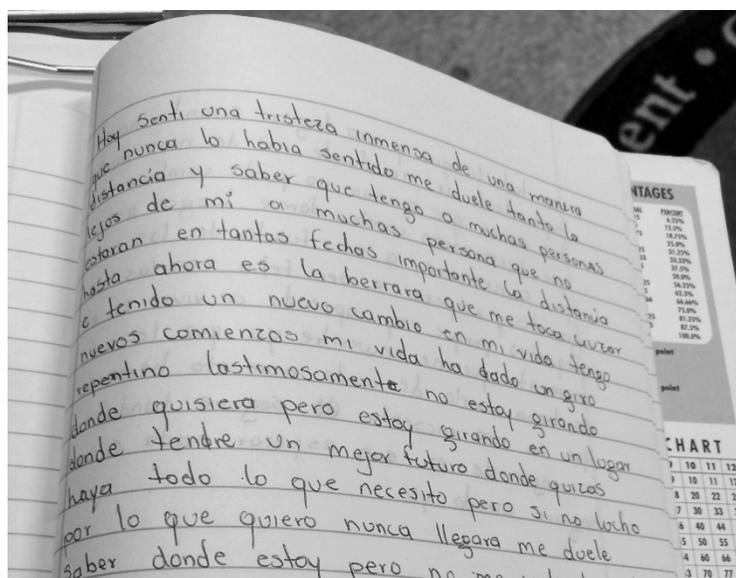
Personal/research journal.

The journal comprised physical and digital pages in which each research team member wrote her or his reflections. The youth coresearchers wrote reflections (often in response to my writing prompts) related to their experiences in the project and their ideas about writing (see writing prompts for the journal in Appendix L.) Although the youth coresearchers did not have to share their reflections with their peers, I frequently invited them to share a snippet of their reflections with me and other team members during the program sessions. In addition, I asked them to allow me to read and make copies of their entire written reflections so I could have a better sense of their learning experiences. I, as

any research team member, also kept a personal/researcher journal. In that notebook, I recorded my ideas and experiences in the program. My journal was a tool to reveal and maintain my interpretations in check.

Artifacts.

I gathered numerous literacy artifacts—namely, written/multimodal texts—that the youth coresearchers used and created during the study. At the end of the first semi-structured interview, I asked each teen to share a sample of her/his writing with me. Some teens showed me on their laptops drafts of academic essays they had written for their English class; others opened their school notebooks and showed me their handwritten notes. While most of those notes concerned school subjects, some notes (like the one presented below) were about their “personal stuff”—that is, things or feelings they were experiencing (e.g., heart break or conflicts with family members). When the youth allowed me, I took pictures of the texts they had shown me (see example below).



I also asked the youth for permission to collect or photograph the texts they had created or used in the program sessions. The youth generally gave me their texts at the end of each program session —unless they forgot to do it or lost their texts. I was therefore able to gather most of the texts the youth produced through the PAR process. For example, I obtained (as originals or copies/pictures) many of their hand-written reflections, coded interview transcripts, and posters. Additionally, I took pictures and short videos of the youth during the composition process and the research presentations. See some pictures of the youth and their texts in the description of the PAR program.

I used the collected artifacts as a point of data triangulation; to corroborate the interview and observation data. For example, I reviewed videos of our research presentations to better understand the focal youth's interactions with attendees, which they had described during the post-program interviews. However, I did not conduct an in-depth, semiotic or discursive analysis of the texts/artifacts; this type of analysis is beyond the scope of my study.

Demographic survey.

At the very beginning of the study, after obtaining IRB and going through the respective assent and consent processes, I asked participating teachers and students to complete an online demographic survey questionnaire. The two participating teachers filled out a short demographic survey (Appendix M). The focal youth coresearchers (n=4) completed an extended demographic survey (Appendix N). The survey questionnaires helped me collect background information on each participant. Table 3 shows the data that I collected from each participant.

Table 3. *Collected Data per Participant*

Participant	Demographic survey	Semi-structured interviews	Program sessions attended & related fieldnotes
Andrés	Yes	Interview #1: 2/19/2019 Interview #2: 6/6/2019	<i>14 Sessions=</i> All sessions
Nany	Yes	Interview #1: 2/22/2019 Interview #2: 6/6/2019	<i>7 Sessions=</i> S1 (3/6/2019); S2 (3/20/2019); S4 (4/3/2019); S6 (4/17/2019); S10 (5/15/2019); S11 (5/22/2019); S13 (6/5/2019)
Pamela	Yes	Interview #1: 3/20/2019 Interview #2: 6/6/2019	<i>6 Sessions=</i> S3 (3/27/2019); S4 (4/3/2019); S7 (4/24/2019); S9 (5/8/2019); S11 (5/22/2019); S14 (6/12/2019)
Teresa	Yes	Interview #1: 2/22/2019 Interview #2: 6/6/2019	<i>9 Sessions=</i> S2 (3/20/2019); S5 (4/10/2019); S6 (4/17/2019); S7 (4/24/2019); S9 (5/8/2019); S11 (5/22/2019); S12 (5/29/2019); S13 (6/5/2019); S14 (6/12/2019)
Ms. Arguer	Yes	Interview #1: 2/27/2019 Interview #2: 6/14/2019	N/A
Mr. Silentio	Yes	Interview #1: 2/28/2019 Interview #2: 6/14/2019	N/A

Note. Because of the large number of artifacts collected per participant, the artifacts are not listed in the table.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data inductively and deductively. For the inductive analysis, I concentrated on an emic perspective and used participants' terms (e.g., "fun/divertido" or "interesting/interesante") to label pieces of raw data (Creswell, 2014). For the deductive analysis, I extracted constructs (e.g., funds of knowledge and conscientization) from my conceptual framework and evaluated whether those "sensitizing concepts" (listed in Appendix O) helped me make better sense of the research situation and the data (Patton, 2002). By using both inductive and deductive approaches, I was able to conduct an in-depth, robust data analysis.

Following Corbin and Strauss' (1990) coding procedures, my data analysis unfolded in three stages. First, I engaged in *open coding*, "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 61). At the beginning of this analytic stage, I reviewed my data sources (i.e., fieldnotes, audio recordings, artifacts, and interview transcripts) and identified data segments related to my research questions. To each segment, I attached one or more labels, or *codes*, that summarized its meaning (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2014). I refined the codes by comparing codes with codes, codes with data, and data with data — i.e., the *constant comparison method* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I then grouped related codes under higher-order codes, or *categories* (Charmaz, 2014). I kept track of this and subsequent analytic processes by writing multiple memos (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the second stage of data analysis, *axial coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), I drew connections among codes, subcategories, and categories. I looked for *patterns* or *themes*, “threads that tied together bits of data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). For instance, during axial coding, I noticed a link between a co-researcher’s “schooling experiences in their home countries” and her “initial writing beliefs/conceptions” and then I looked at other data sources to determine whether that pattern held true for other coresearchers. During axial coding, I also identified the most significant codes and categories —those which could directly help me answer my RQs and which accurately represented the collected data. I then tried to find similar concepts in the extant literature to increase my understanding of the data and strengthen my preliminary findings.

Finally, in the last stage of coding (i.e., *selective coding*), I chose core categories around which I could integrate all the other categories and codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To that end, I examined the information recorded in memos and compared prior rounds of analysis and findings. I looked in the data for evidence and counterevidence of the identified conceptual relationships and patterns, that is, I conducted *data triangulation* (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During this last analytic stage, I also discarded codes that did not seem applicable or relevant to the data. For example, I removed the code “translanguaging” from my coding scheme because, contrary to what I initially expected, none of the participants alluded to the notion that NLHSs’ use of their full linguistic repertoires influenced their writing conceptions.

To facilitate the analytic process and keep systematic record of my data interpretation, I used a qualitative data analysis software program called NVivo. Table 4 summarizes how the codes and categories developed across the three analytic stages.

Analytic stages RQs	Open Coding (Created and grouped codes.)	Axial coding (Refined categories and codes; identified patterns.)	Selective coding (Chose core categories.)
3. Aspects of PAR process that impacted writing conceptions	3A1. Having “freedom” to choose and learn about a topic 3A2. Being able to draw on their previous life experiences and <i>funds of knowledge</i> (e.g., poster design) 3B1. Having the opportunity to write/create different texts 3B2. Writing “things” that are important or useful 3C1. Interviewing people; knowing what they think 3C2. Receiving <i>explicit writing instruction</i> ; getting writing feedback from facilitator 3C3. Sharing research findings with others	3A1. Centered on the youth's interests and experiences 3A2. Developed youth's agency 3B. Provided youth with new, personally relevant opportunities to write and compose 3C. Promoted oral interactions (mediated by writing) among youth and between teens and adults	3A. Youth-centeredness 3B. Novel writing opportunities 3C. Dialogic talk

Note. I drew on Anfara, Brown, and Mangione’s (2002) notion of code mapping to create this table. The codes in italics are deductive, derived from the conceptual framework. The terms in quotation marks were taken directly from the data.

Validity

Whereas traditional social researchers concentrate on research validity and reliability, critical scholars call into question the postpositivist value of those constructs and contend that investigators should aim to increase trustworthiness. I used three main strategies to increase the trustworthiness of my study. First, I triangulated data sources, that is, I analyzed and compared data from multiple sources (i.e., interviews, participant observations, and literacy artifacts) to reduce the risk of *ad hoc* or unwarranted interpretations. Second, I requested and incorporated feedback from the study participants on my interpretation of the data. This process of *member-checking* (Carspecken, 1996; Maxwell, 1996) allowed me to corroborate, challenge, or alter my interpretation of Latinx newcomer students’ writing. Third, I continuously reflected on my involvement in the program and the research procedures; I kept detailed record of these reflections in my

researcher journal (as explained above.) As a critical ethnographer, I also paid close attention to “how [my] own acts of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as [I] reveal the same in what [I] study” (Noblit, 2004, p. 185). I recognize myself as a program participant and an outsider researcher who could bring both biases and insight to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Because ethical issues emerge along the entire research process (Creswell, 2014), I devised ways to address the potential ethical issues that could occur in each research phase. Before starting the study, I obtained approval from the institutional review board (IRB) at the University of Maryland-College Park, the school county, and the school principal to conduct my research. After receiving the authorization, I enlisted study participants by clearly and honestly explaining the research purpose and study procedures. I then asked prospective participants to either sign a consent form (if they are 18 years or older) or obtain signed consent from their guardians and sign an assent form (if they are underage.) Each study participant received a document outlining the research and a copy of the consent form for his or her records.

To ensure confidentiality, I removed all identifying information from the data and asked each participant to choose a pseudonym, which I used to label their respective data. I saved the data on a password protected computer and/or kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. I was the only person who had access to the entire data set. Throughout data collection and analysis, I frequently communicated with study participants, school administrators, and child guardians to keep them informed of the research process and address any questions or concerns. Also, to be congruent with a critical research stance, I

found ways to reciprocate and empower study participants—including youth coresearchers— and communities. For example, I offered them help with schoolwork and postsecondary pathways. I also invited them to local events (e.g., youth summits and social justice conferences) in which they could learn about immigrant rights and education opportunities.

During research dissemination, I have tried to make all research reports as clear and honest as possible. I have shared the findings with interested stakeholders and participants. However, I have not and will not disclose information that could harm any of the study participants or their families in any way.

Additional ethical concerns could have stemmed from my facilitator-researcher role. I tried to avoid importing my assumptions into the data by keeping a methodological journal while investigating (Charmaz, 2014). In that journal, I reflected upon my preconceptions and documented my decision-making processes during the research (Charmaz, 2014). In my journal and analytic memos, I also kept track of the evolving relation (or lack thereof) between the collected data and theoretical constructs; in this way, I sought to ensure that the constructs were relevant to my study and that my data interpretation was well warranted (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained the two-tiered design of my dissertation study and justified why I drew on critical ethnography. I also described the study data sources (i.e., semi-structured interviews, participant observations, demographic surveys, analytic memos, and literacy artifacts) and explained my data analysis procedures. I finally

addressed the validity strategies and ethical considerations concerning my dissertation study. In the next chapter, I elaborate on my analysis and findings.

Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, I present my study findings, which stemmed from my conceptual framework and from themes I identified through iterative data analyses. My findings are important and novel in that they show that NLHSs' unique experiences (in their home countries and in the US) shape how they conceive both research and writing.

I divided this chapter into three sections; each section addresses a research question (RQ). In the first section, I answer RQ1 (which focused on the NLHSs' perceptions of PAR) by drawing heavily on critical pedagogy scholarship, especially on the constructs of "conscientization," "agency," and "dialogue." More precisely, in that section, I contend that the focal NLHSs perceived PAR as an opportunity for conscientization and for challenging dialogue.

In the second section, I address RQ2— How did NLHSs conceive writing throughout the PAR process? — by building on the literature on conceptions of writing (e.g., Mateos & Solé, 2012; Villalón et al., 2015; White & Bruning, 2005). Specifically, in my analysis and discussion of the findings, I borrow Villalón et al.'s (2015) distinction between "reproductive" and "transformational" conceptions of writing to characterize the NLHSs' ideas of writing before, during, and after the program. I argue that, through the PAR program, the youth coresearchers' conceptions of writing shifted and their transformational conceptions became more prevalent.

In the last section of this chapter, I answer RQ3 arguing that the shifts in the youth's conceptions of writing were related to three main aspects of the PAR process: (a) being youth- centered, (b) offering novel writing opportunities, and (c) promoting dialogic talk. This last set of findings is strongly rooted in my understanding of critical

pedagogy and sociocultural theory, particularly in my application of the theoretical principle that learning occurs through social interaction. I illustrate all the findings with excerpts from the interview transcripts and fieldnotes. The excerpts are representative of the youth coresearchers' opinions and of what occurred during the program. To contextualize my coresearchers' perspectives, I summarize their in- and out-of PAR program experiences in Table 5. For a detailed description of the focal youth's background, see Chapter 4.

Table 5. Focal Coresearchers' Experiences, Research, and Compositions

Focal Youth	Key Experiences in Home Country	Key Experiences in the US (at the Time of the PAR process)	Research Topic & Personal Connection to Topic	Compositions Created & Actions Taken
Andrés	Lived with his mom, dad, and brother in San Salvador until December 2015. Was a “difficult student,” uninterested in school.	Lived with his aunts and cousins. Worked part-time. Was trying to increase his GPA and become a “better student.”	Teacher happiness. A “good, happy teacher” in the US had helped him (re)gain interest in school.	His two co-authored compositions (a computer-designed poster and a hand-made poster with collage) showed what made teachers happy. He presented his research/compositions to teachers and administrators to explain the importance of teacher happiness and prevent teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs.
Nany	Lived with grandmother and sister in Honduras for most of her life (until March 2018.) Studied in great public schools, where she “learned a lot,” especially about technology and language.	Lived with her mom, stepfather, and 8 other people. Missed her grandmother greatly. Worked part-time. Knew “very little” English. Was a “dedicated student”	Immigrant student sadness. She had suffered from “deep sadness” and “depression” since she migrated to the US.	Her two co-authored (a computer-designed poster and a book box) summarized the causes of immigrant youth's sadness and tips to help them be “less sad.” She presented her research/compositions to adults and teens in order to raise awareness of the youth's emotional struggles and improve their emotional well-being.

Focal Youth	Key Experiences in Home Country	Key Experiences in the US (at the Time of the PAR process)	Research Topic & Personal Connection to Topic	Compositions Created & Actions Taken
Pamela	Lived with her grandmother and sister in Honduras for most of her life (until Nov. 2016.) Her mom forced her to migrate to the US in 2016.	Lived with her mom, stepfather, and two siblings. Worked part-time. Very involved in religious activities (e.g., Bible studies.) Had difficulties communicating in English and making friends in school.	People's reactions to unwanted life changes. Her life had changed a lot since she moved to the US and she was struggling to adjust to those changes.	Her compositions (a computer-designed poster and a short film) represented young people's reactions to unwanted life changes, especially forced migration. She presented her research/compositions to help youth reflect and adjust to life changes.
Teresa	Had "a good life" in El Salvador with her mom and two sisters until the age of 7. Was physically and psychologically abused by her grandmother for 8 years (until Oct. 2018, when she moved to the US.) Was an "excellent student," but her some peers bullied her.	Lived with her mom and two sisters. Worked part-time. Outstanding student; involved in multiple school groups and activities (e.g., tennis team and legal debate team.)	Teacher happiness. She had good, close relationships with teachers and wanted to make sure they were happy.	Her two co-authored compositions (a computer-designed poster and a hand-made poster with collage) showed what made teachers happy. She presented her research/compositions to teachers and administrators to explain the importance of teacher happiness and prevent teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs.

Note. The terms in quotation marks are those that the youth used to describe themselves and their experiences.

1. How Did NLHSs Perceive and Learn about PAR?

As noted in the methodology chapter, I answered the question of “how did NLHSs perceive PAR?” by analyzing data (namely, fieldnotes and interviews) inductively and deductively. In the first round of coding, I focused on how the focal NLHSs described their experiences in the program and used their own terms to label pieces of raw data (see the code development in Table 4). This inductive analysis revealed that, in general, the focal youth viewed PAR as “interesting,” “fun,” and “challenging.” In the second round of coding, I concentrated on examining the reasons why they viewed PAR in those ways and explored how conceptual constructs helped me understand the youth’s perceptions. In that analytic stage, I noticed two intriguing patterns. On one hand, the youth considered PAR as interesting/fun because it allowed them to learn not only about themselves, their selected topic, research, and writing but also about how other people thought, felt, and lived. On the other hand, they perceived PAR as a challenging process that involved communication and analysis. In the last analytic stage, I further conceptualized those patterns and concluded that the focal NLHSs perceived PAR as a relevant opportunity for conscientization and challenging dialogue.

My data analysis also revealed that the focal youth coresearchers’ perceptions and expectations of PAR were tied to their prior research experiences. For that reason, I will start answering RQ1 by outlining the typical research experiences the teens had before the program. Then, using that information as background, I expound on the focal youth coresearchers’ perceptions of PAR.

Initial research perceptions and experiences.

Before the program, the participating youth reported having few prior research experiences. Their previous research experiences usually involved looking up information (in books or on the internet) about a teacher-assigned topic and then reporting what they found. Pamela's previous research experiences—described during the first interview— were typical among the youth:

Angélica: *¿Alguna vez has hecho tú una investigación?*

[Have you ever done an investigation?]

Pamela: *Se puede decir que sí. [Hice una investigación] acerca del pueblo donde vivía (en Honduras). La historia de cómo fue que empezó [el pueblo]¹⁰ y por qué tiene ese nombre [...]*

[You can say yes. [I did an investigation] about the town where I used to live (in Honduras). It was the story of how [the town] began and why it was named that way [...]]

Angélica: *¿Y eso te lo mandaron de la escuela?*

[And was that a school assignment?]

Pamela: *Era una investigación de la escuela, en la clase de español.*

[It was an investigation from the school, the Spanish class.]

Angélica: *¿Y has hecho cosas parecidas o investigaciones acá [en los Estados Unidos]?*

[And have you done similar things or research here [in the United States]??]

Pamela: *No sé, tal vez en chemistry. Tuvimos que investigar a los personajes o a las personas que contribuyeron al descubrimiento de los elementos [...]*

[I don't know, maybe in Chemistry. We had to investigate the characters or people who contributed to the discovery of the elements [...]]

Angélica: *¿Y qué te pareció ese tipo de trabajo? ¿Fue fácil o difícil?*

[And what did you think of that kind of work? Was it easy or difficult?]

Pamela: *Fue fácil encontrar la información; todo estaba en internet. Lo difícil fue exponerlo.*

[It was easy to find the information; everything was all on the internet. The hard part was presenting it.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué?*

[Why?]

¹⁰ I slightly modified some interview excerpts to facilitate the reader's understanding.

Pamela: *Porque yo considero que una exposición no es solo leer. Sino que básicamente lo que tú aprendes tienes que compartirlo con los otros. Pero es difícil [compartirlo] cuando no sabes hablar el inglés bien.*
 [Because I consider that a presentation should not be just reading. But, basically, you have to share what you learned with others. But it is difficult [to share it] when you don't know how to speak English well.]
 (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019).

As Pamela's statements show, the youth had some experience doing research as part of school assignments in the US and in their home countries. These assignments commonly focused on teacher-selected, academic subjects rather than on students' personal interests or experiences. The youth typically investigated the assigned topics by consulting secondary sources, such as articles on textbooks or the Internet. Then, as Pamela said, the youth generally "ha[d] to share what they ha[d] learned with others," namely their teacher and classmates. They rarely shared their findings (or the information they had gathered) beyond the classroom walls. Instead, they consulted and presented the information in their classrooms to satisfy class requirements. The focal youth reported they had "never" or "almost never" done original studies or collected data on their own—outside nor inside school.

In line with their previous research experiences, the four focal youth affirmed during the pre-program interview that research meant "looking up information on books or the internet about a particular topic." The main goal of doing research, they upheld, was collecting information and then reporting the information to the person who had asked them to do the research. Andrés, for example, shared the following:

Angélica: *Si alguien te preguntara qué significa la palabra investigación, ¿tú qué dirías?*
 [If someone asked you what the word research means, what would you say?]

- Andrés: *Yo creo que diría... Tener un poco de conocimiento, agarrar un poco de conocimiento acerca de un tema en particular [...]*
[I think I would say... Have a little knowledge, get some knowledge about a particular topic.]
- Angélica: *Y si alguien te dice: “haz una investigación”, ¿tú qué harías?*
[And if someone tells you: “do an investigation,” what would you do?]
- Andrés: *Pues yo primero tengo que saber qué tema en particularmente voy a investigar. Después tratar de buscar ciertos recursos, leyendo o buscando en Internet. Y que sean fuentes confiables; me tengo que asegurar de eso antes de mostrar la información que he recaudado. Y después creo que, solo por si las dudas, preguntarle a alguien que sepa si está bien [lo que encontré] o algo así. Y que me dé su aprobación o su opinión [...]*
[Well, I first have to know what subject, in particular, I am going to investigate. After trying to seek certain resources, reading or searching the Internet. And [checking] that they are reliable sources; I have to make sure of that before showing the information I have collected. And then I think, just to avoid doubts, I’d ask someone who knows if it's okay [what I found] or something. And [that person] gives me his approval or opinion [...]]
- Angélica: *Ok. ¿Y al final [de la investigación] uno qué hace?*
[Okay. And at the end [of the investigation] what does one do?]
- Andrés: *Al final, uno ya tiene toda la información. Solo la organiza, según como sea la mejor manera de explicarla o presentarla a otras personas.*
[At the end, one already has all the information. One just has to organize it to explain or present it to other people in the best way.]
- Angélica: *¿Y para qué sirve hacer todo eso, todo el proceso de investigación?*
[And what is the purpose of doing all that, the entire research process?]
- Andrés: *Para, este... más que nada, yo creo que sirve para para darle conocimiento a la otra persona que se lo pidió, por ejemplo.*
To... More than anything, I think, it is useful to give knowledge to the person who asked for it [the research], for example. (Andrés, Formal interview #1, February 19, 2019)

Notice, in the above excerpts, that the two teens placed other people (rather than themselves) at the center of the research process. From their perspective, research was about gathering and giving knowledge to others; it was something they did in response to other people’s requests. Interestingly, during the first interview, neither Andrés or Pamela alluded to the possibility of doing research related to their personal interests or to satisfy their own curiosity.

Unlike Andrés and Pamela, Nany and Teresa intimated that research could start with one's interests or ideas. Nany affirmed that you could do research about something that interested you (rather than others): “[*una investigación*] se basa en tener más conocimiento de algo interesante, o algo que te interesa, y llevar más a fondo de qué es específicamente el tema.” “[An investigation] is based on getting more knowledge of something interesting, or something that interests you, and going more in depth on what the subject specifically is.” (Nany, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). Similarly, Teresa argued that one could do research about “the doubts one may have” (“*sobre las dudas que tengamos*”) (Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). Both Teresa and Nany understood that research could focus not only on what other people “asked you to do” but also on their personal interests or ideas. Still, none of the focal teenagers explicitly mentioned (before the program) that research could bring about changes or help people better understand themselves or their realities.

Perceptions of PAR.

Several youth researchers characterized the afterschool program as “an opportunity to learn” (“*una oportunidad para aprender*”) about things—e.g., research and critical theory—that they were not usually taught at school. By the end of the program, the focal youth came to see research in general and PAR in particular as ways to increase their understanding of themselves and of their social world. They considered PAR as especially relevant—or, in their words, “interesting”—because it was rooted in their experiences and interests. Below I show, based on my data analysis and interpretation, that the focal coresearchers perceived PAR as a relevant opportunity for conscientization and for dialogue.

PAR as Conscientization.

My analysis indicated that the focal coresearchers perceived PAR as an opportunity for *conscientization*, or as a way to deepen their awareness of their social world and of themselves (as social agents). The focal youth began to see themselves as agents (individuals who could act and effect social changes) in the PAR process when they realized they could carry out research on topics of their interest, related to their school lives. As Teresa explains below, the youth did not expect to be allowed to decide what to study, do, or talk about.

Teresa: *Yo pensaba que usted nos iba a dar los temas como, por ejemplo: “Van a investigar sobre la atmósfera”, y nosotros íbamos que tener que buscar la información en internet. Pero luego me sorprendí porque nosotros mismos teníamos que escoger nuestro tema y de qué queríamos hablar.*

[I thought that you were going to give us the topics like, for example: “You are going to investigate about the atmosphere,” and we then had to look up the information on the internet. But then I was surprised because we were the ones who had to choose our topic and what we wanted to talk about.]

Angélica: *¿Y por qué fue eso tan sorprendente?*
[And why was that so surprising?]

Teresa: *Porque como que estamos acostumbrados a que siempre nos digan qué tenemos que investigar, qué es lo que tenemos que hacer, qué información tenemos que ver. Entonces, fue sorprendente como que era nuestra opción, nosotros éramos libres de escoger sobre qué queríamos hacer nuestra investigación.*

[Because we are like used to always be told what we have to investigate, what we have to do, what information we have to find. So, it was surprising that it was our choice, that we were free to choose what we wanted to research about.] (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Like Teresa, the other youth coresearchers were used to conducting classroom-based research projects in which teachers told them what topic they had to investigate and how. Therefore, Teresa and the other focal youth expected that I, like a traditional teacher, would assign them a research topic and give them very specific requirements to

complete the “research assignment.” They did not expect that, in the PAR process, they were going to choose the topics to research and talk about, as Teresa affirmed in the above excerpt. The focal youth reported, in later interviews and program sessions, that having the opportunity –or the “freedom” (as several of the focal youth called it)– to investigate a topic of their interest and to lead the research process made PAR different from the research projects or assignments they had previously done at school. Further, the focal youth argued that conducting research on a self-selected topic was “better” (i.e., less “difficult” and “boring”) than investigating an assigned topic. Thus, the focal youth argued the PAR process was better than the research projects they typically did in their regular classes and described the PAR process with positive terms (e.g., “interesting” and “fun”).

Unlike typical school-based research projects, PAR provided youth with opportunities to develop new understandings of themselves and their possibilities. Pamela, for example, came to see herself and her experiences in a different way as she conducted her PAR study. Before the PAR program, Pamela had experienced several “unwanted changes” (e.g., leaving her home country, Honduras) and she was struggling to adjust to her new life circumstances. She, therefore, decided her PAR study would center on how people react to unwanted changes. Over the course of her research, Pamela increased her understanding of not only of others’ reactions to life changes but also her own experiences.

Fue interesante darme cuenta de que muchas veces las personas no sabemos cómo reaccionar ante esos cambios no deseados, o nos sentimos oprimidos, porque es algo que va a ocurrir en nuestra vida y no podemos evitarlo. Y algo que me llamó mucho la atención fue que todos reaccionamos de diferentes formas ante cambios que no queremos en nuestras vidas, pero que, al pasar el tiempo, creo que todos aceptamos que esos cambios van a estar y no los podemos

cambiar. De todas las entrevistas que hice, creo que todos lo que ellos tenían en común, era que todos terminaban aceptando esos cambios de una forma positiva, aunque al principio no lo vieron de esa forma.

[It was interesting to realize that many times people do not know how to react to unwanted changes, or we feel oppressed, because it is something that happens in our lives and we cannot avoid it. And something that really caught my attention was that we all react in different ways to the changes we don't want in our lives, but that, as time goes by, I think we all accept that those changes are going to happen and that we can't change them. Of all the interviews I did, I think that all they had in common was that everyone ended up accepting those changes in a positive way, although they didn't see it that way at first.] (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

As the above excerpt suggests, Pamela realized through her PAR study that, like her, people felt confused or “oppressed” when unwanted changes occurred in their lives. But she also found that, as time went by, people came to accept the changes in a “positive way”—even if they had initially resisted the changes. This finding led her to believe that she, like the people she interviewed, would eventually come to view unwanted life changes positively, which had helped her change how she views the changes that were occurring in her life. Put simply, through PAR, Pamela deepened her understanding of what she was going through and how she could handle difficult changes in her life.

Indeed, PAR allowed the focal coresearchers to better understand and use their *agency*—their capacity to act and transform reality. For instance, as Andrés and Teresa presented their study of teachers' happiness, they came to understand they had the power to change how people (namely, students and administrators) thought about and acted towards teachers. Andrés alluded to that idea in the post-program interview:

Dudo mucho que antes de nuestra presentación los alumnos se hayan puesto a pensar qué hará felices a los maestros o cómo sus acciones [como estudiantes] afectan a los maestros. Pero, ahora que les dimos esa información, ellos van a saber que todo lo que han hecho, lo que están haciendo y lo que van a hacer, tiene un efecto en el maestro. Ahora ellos [los alumnos] tienen que pensar más sus acciones.

[I doubt very much that before our presentation students had thought about what made teachers happy or how their actions [as students] affect teachers. But, now that we gave them that information, they will know that all what they have done, what they are doing and what they are going to do, has an effect on their teacher. Now they [the students] have to think their actions more.] (Andrés, Formal interview # 2, June 13, 2019).

In the above quote, Andrés intimated that he had the capacity to transform students' thoughts and actions towards their teachers. He argued that, if students were made aware how their actions affected teachers, they would be "more conscious of their actions" and "behave better" with their teachers (Andrés, Formal interview # 2, June 13, 2019). Likewise, he believed he could foment teacher collaboration and administrator support if he showed, in his research presentations, that colleagues' and administrators' support was important for teacher happiness (Andrés, Formal interview # 2, June 13, 2019). Thus, during the post-PAR interview, Andrés claimed several times that he had the power to alter the ideas, actions, and circumstances of school community members. In other words, because of PAR, he affirmed that he had agency.

Furthermore, as PAR allowed the focal youth coresearchers to explore topics that were significant to them, it encouraged them to increase their understanding of their social world. Nany and her team, for instance, chose to investigate immigrant students' sadness because she and some of her classmates had struggled with "deep sadness" and "depression." Their research revealed that the main causes of immigrant students' sadness were issues related to school (e.g., bullying, homework, and low grades) and home (e.g., sick relatives and family separation). They also found, as Nany explains in the excerpt below, that students' sadness could negatively impact their experiences at home and at school. Thus, through their PAR study, the youth coresearchers deepened

their awareness of how immigrant students' social realities (at home and school) could shape their emotions and personal matters.

Nosotras [mis compañeras de investigación y yo] escogimos un tema que nos llamaba la atención: la tristeza de los estudiantes. Al investigar ese tema, vimos cómo estaba el panorama en la escuela y como muchas personas dejan que la tristeza afecte tanto en los estudios como en el hogar. No simplemente afecta las cosas sino a sí mismos; no tienen ánimos, no tienen ganas de hacer nada. Y creo que fue un tema y una investigación como que muy interesante.

[We [my research teammates and I] chose a topic that caught our attention: students' sadness. In researching that topic, we saw like how the school panorama was and like how people let sadness affect both their studies and homes. It does not simply affect things but themselves; they don't have the energy; they don't feel like doing anything. And I think it was a very interesting topic and investigation.] (Nany, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Moreover, Nany and her teammates discovered that students' sadness was “contagious” and could affect the school as a whole. They argued, based on their research findings, that a sad student could “transmit the sadness” to peers and teachers—which could, in turn, have a negative impact on the classroom environment and the school “mood” (Fieldnotes, May 8, 2019; Fieldnotes, May 15, 2019). Students' sadness could then become part of the “school panorama.” Nany and her team were able to see that panorama as they engaged in PAR. In other words, doing PAR afforded them the opportunity to recognize or become more conscious of what was happening in their school world and how that affected them and others.

PAR as Challenging Dialogue.

The focal youth coresearchers affirmed that conducting PAR was challenging. They contended that, during the PAR process, they faced four main challenges: (1) formulating research and interview questions, (2) recruiting study participants, (3) conducting interviews, and (4) presenting their research projects to various audiences. I

argue that those four challenging activities involved *dialogue*: communication aimed at discovering and transforming their worlds and others'. I expound on this point in what follows. I discuss inter-team dialogue later in this chapter.

For the focal youth, the first challenge in the PAR process was formulating the “right questions” –i.e., research questions and interview questions that helped them obtain the information they wanted:

Angélica: *¿Cuáles fueron los mayores retos que tuviste durante la investigación?*
[What were the biggest challenges you had during the investigation?]

Teresa: *Los mayores retos, yo no sé, lo más difícil fue crear las preguntas adecuadas.*
[The biggest challenges, I don't know, the hardest part was creating the right questions.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué?*
[Why?]

Teresa: *Porque es difícil como saber qué preguntas hacer para obtener la información que se necesita, y más cuando es la primera vez que se hace. Entonces, por eso fue lo más difícil.*
[Because it is difficult to know what questions you need to ask in order to obtain the information you need, and it's more [difficult] when it is the first time you are doing it. So, that's why it was the most difficult.]
(Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

According to Teresa, she struggled to come up with interview questions that allowed her to “get the information” that she wanted to know. That is, it was difficult for her to determine which questions would allow her to establish a sincere dialogue with her interviewees that would help her discover their worlds and understand how their worlds made them feel.

It was also challenging for the youth to find people willing to be interviewed:

Angélica: *¿Y cuáles fueron los mayores retos que tuviste durante la investigación?*
[And what were the biggest challenges you had during the investigation?]

Pamela: *[El reto fue] que las personas accedieran a ser entrevistadas. Creo que no a todos nos gusta que nos hagan preguntas así. [...] Quizás nunca nadie nos había preguntado cómo nos sentimos o cómo afrontamos ciertos momentos o cambios. Pero, por eso, fue interesante saber cómo ellos reaccionaron ante esas preguntas y la forma en que ellos respondieron.*

[The challenge was] that people agreed to be interviewed. I think not everyone likes to be asked questions like that. [...] Perhaps no one had ever asked us how we feel or how we face certain moments or changes. But, because of that, it was interesting to know how they reacted to those questions and how they responded.] (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

As can be surmised from Pamela's comments, not everyone was willing to dialogue with the youth and answer their questions. Although people gave various reasons for not wanting to participate in the interview, Pamela claimed that people (including, her) disliked or were not used to talking about "very personal," emotional issues. The youth, therefore, empathized with potential interviewees and comprehended that dialoguing about personal issues could make people feel uncomfortable or vulnerable. So, even though some people did not want to be interviewed, the youth were able to gain insight into some of the risks and challenges that dialogue entailed.

Another challenge of the PAR process for the focal youth was interviewing and participating in a dialogue with the interviewees. They had never conducted interviews before and were unsure of how to "keep the conversation going." Talking about the challenges he encountered while conducting the interviews, Andrés shared:

A veces, me sentía nervioso [durante las entrevistas] porque algunos maestros respondían mucho y no me quedaba nada para preguntar. Pero algunos respondían más poco y ahí sí podía agregar otras preguntas a la conversación. Ahí no me sentía tan nervioso, ya que simplemente la conversación iba surgiendo. [Sometimes, I felt nervous [during interviews] because some teachers answered a lot and I had nothing left to ask. But some answered less and there I could add other questions to the conversation. I did not feel so nervous then because the conversation just emerged.] (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

While Andrés did not directly refer to the interview as a dialogue, he described the interview as a conversation that “emerged” or was constructed between two people. He recognized that if one person talked “a lot” (or too much), the other could be left without much to say and, as a result, the conversation would “not go well.” Thus, Andrés discovered that interviews involved dialogue between different people (or parties) who communicate their views and explore the world together (cf. Freire, 1970). Yet, as Freire (1970) contended, dialogic interaction can be difficult, especially for people who, like the focal youth, have had few opportunities to question and dialogue with authority figures, like school teachers.

The last dialogue-related challenge the focal youth identified was presenting their research projects. Three of the focal youth affirmed it was difficult to present their research to various audiences, especially when they had to deliver the presentation in English. They also indicated that presenting their projects made them feel nervous. For example, Nany, who had the least amount of experience making presentations in English, shared:

Nany: *Me sentí nerviosa cuando presenté la investigación.*
[I felt nervous when I presented the investigation.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué?*
[Why?]

Nany: *Porque no puedo muy bien el inglés.*
[Because I can't speak English very well.]

Angélica: *Pero también lo presentaste en español, ¿no?*
[But you also presented it in Spanish, right?]

Nany: *Ajá.*
[Uhu.]

Angélica: *¿Cuáles eran las diferencias entre cuando lo hiciste en español que cuando lo hiciste en inglés?*
[What were the differences between when you presented it in Spanish and when you did it in English?]

Nany: *En español pues tuve control de mí misma, y pude inspirarme en lo que quería hablar y poder decir lo que pensaba; mientras en inglés se me*

dificultó mucho porque, aunque pensara muchas cosas, no lo podía traducir al inglés.

[In Spanish, I had control of myself, and I could get inspired by what I wanted to say and be able to say what I thought; while in English it was very difficult for me because, even if I thought many things, I could not translate it into English.]

Angélica: *O sea, ¿preferiste presentar en inglés o en español?*

[So, did you prefer to present in English or Spanish?]

Nany: *Yo pienso que en las dos porque el español es algo que me sé, y el inglés es algo que estoy aprendiendo y quiero aprenderlo más. Yo sabía que hablarlo en inglés me iba a ayudar mucho.*

[In both because Spanish is something that I know, and English is something that I am learning and that I want to learn more. I knew that speaking it in English would help me a lot.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué te va a ayudar mucho?*

[Why will it help you a lot?]

Nany: *Porque así me va a quitar el temor de hablarlo y hacerlo sin importar la opinión de los demás.*

[Because that's how I will get over my fear of speaking [English], and do it regardless of others' opinion.] (Nany, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

As the above excerpt suggests, Nany was initially nervous about presenting her research in English because she was not confident on her English-speaking skills. She was concerned about what people might think about her English level. However, during the PAR process, Nany and the other youth coresearchers had numerous opportunities to practice public speaking in both English and Spanish, which helped them increase their self-confidence. For instance, the PAR presentations and subsequent Q&A sessions allowed the youth to realize that they could speak “fearlessly” and communicate with both English- and Spanish-speaking audiences. Thus, although Nany’s above statements could be construed in multiple ways, from a critical pedagogy perspective, I interpreted them as evidence that PAR allowed youth to “reclaim their right to speak their word” and partake in genuine dialogue (see, Freire, 1970, chapter 3).

In sum, the focal NLHSs perceived PAR as a relevant opportunity to engage in challenging dialogue and conscientization. Through PAR, they had sincere conversations with others and increased their awareness of their social world and of themselves, as social agents of change. A crucial part of this process of dialogue and conscientization was writing, and I turn next to the focal youth's conceptions of writing throughout the PAR program.

2. How Did NLHSs Conceive and Learn Writing Throughout a PAR Process?

Through my data analysis, I identified a second set of findings related to the focal youth's writing conceptions. I began the formal analysis by reviewing how the youth defined or characterized writing in the interviews and the program sessions. I then created in-vivo codes of the youth's definitions of writing (e.g., "writing is 'copying'"; "writing is 'a way to express yourself'") and used those codes to tag corresponding excerpts in fieldnotes and interviews. In subsequently identifying patterns among the codes, I discovered that the youths defined writing in three primary ways: a manual act, a way to record and remember information, and a form of expression or communication. In the last round of analysis, I examined how those three categories related to the extant literature on writing. I eventually realized—using the constant comparison method—that the first two categories mirrored a reproductive conception of writing and the third category reflected a transformational conception of writing (discussed in Villalón et al., 2015). I then re-labeled the coded data pieces the new conceptual categories and re-interpreted the meaning of the data as a whole.

My data analysis indicated that, throughout the PAR process, the youth coresearchers placed additional emphasis on writing as a tool to express themselves, help others, and transform their worlds. Because this perspective reflects a transformational conception of writing, I argue the focal youth strengthened their transformational conception of writing over the course of the PAR process. In what follows, I evidence that point by describing and interpreting the writing conceptions the focal youth had before, during, and after PAR.

Before the program.

When I asked participant youth to define writing during the initial formal interview, most were flabbergasted. Several said nobody had ever asked them that question, and they had never thought about the meaning of writing. Frequently, the youths initially described writing as “something you did with your hands” (i.e., a manual or mechanical act). For example, Pamela stated at the beginning of the first interview: “*escribir es usar tu mano y lapicero para rayar un papel*” [writing is using your hand and a pen to make a mark on a paper] (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). Based on her description, it would seem as if she conceived writing merely as a physical activity—i.e., manipulating certain instruments (e.g., pen and paper) to make physical marks.

While the teens’ initial descriptions excluded the communicative, emotional, and cognitive aspects of writing, when I prompted them to expand on their definitions, they usually outlined more complex conceptions of writing. The four focal participants pointed out that writing could be a means of expression or communication. Pamela, for instance, added to her initial definition that “*escribir sería como tratar de ilustrar lo que*

piensas, lo que está pensando tu mente. O sería una forma de expresarte, una forma de hablar sin usar tu voz, o una forma de tratar de ser escuchado por los demás.” [Writing would be like trying to illustrate what you think, what your mind is thinking. Or it could be a way of expressing yourself, a way of speaking without using your voice, or a way of trying to be heard by others.] (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). Similarly, Andrés affirmed: *[escribir es] como uno puede darse a entender. Uno está escribiendo, haciendo, no sé, lo que uno está pensando, lo que uno quiere tratar de hacer llegar.* [Writing is how one can make oneself understood. One is writing, doing, I don’t know, what one is thinking, what one wants to try to get across] (Formal interview #1, February 19, 2019). These two quotes show how participating NLHSs conceived writing as a means to express themselves and communicate their thoughts and opinions to others. The idea that writing can be a way to craft and disseminate one’s own perspectives reflects a transformational conception of writing (Mateos & Solé, 2012; Villalón et al., 2015; White & Bruning, 2005). Therefore, it appears the focal youth had an incipient transformational conception of writing at the beginning of the program.

Yet, the focal youth also held a reproductive conception of writing; they considered writing as a tool to record (rather than transform) information, events, and thoughts. For example, Teresa viewed writing as a way to remember her thoughts: *“si estamos pensando algo y lo escribimos, y luego regresamos a los días, entonces vamos a saber qué estábamos pensando en ese momento, y es como una forma de recordarnos.”* [“If we are thinking something and we write it, and we return to it [the writing] after some days, then we will know what we were thinking at that time, and it is like a way to remind ourselves.”] (Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). Likewise, the three other

focal youth mentioned in the first interview that they viewed and utilized writing as a way to avoid forgetting information. The youth typically alluded to writing as record keeping (i.e., a reproductive conception of writing) when talking about school-based writing activities. White and Bruning (2005) found this association between school writing and a reproductive conception of among college students; I will discuss this point further in the conclusion chapter.

As I inquired into the youth coresearchers' ideas about writing in the first formal interview, I also found their writing conceptions were related to the language(s) in which they wrote. Three of the four focal teens conceived writing in English as "difficult" and "time-consuming" because they did not know that language well, and they spent considerable time trying to figure out what and how to write. In particular, the youth reported struggling with English grammar (Andrés, Nany, Pamela, Teresa) and vocabulary (Nany, Pamela, Teresa). Because of those difficulties, the four focal youth believed they were not "good" English-language writers, and they were not confident in their English-language writing skills. As an example, see Teresa's comments during the first interview:

Angélica: *¿tú qué tan bien crees escribes en inglés? En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 5 el mejor puntaje, ¿cómo calificarías tu escritura en inglés?*
[how well do you think you write in English? On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest score, how would you rate your writing in English?]

Teresa: *Oh, creo que está en 2 o 2.5.*
[Oh, I think it's a 2 or 2.5]

Angélica: *2 o 2.5 sobre 5. Okay.*
[2 or 2.5 out of 5. Okay.]

Teresa: *Aunque en el examen de WIDA dice que escribo en 3.5, 3.4, por ahí.*
[Although the WIDA exam says that my writing score is around 3.5, 3.4.]

Angélica: *Y entonces, ¿tú por qué dices que es 2.5?*
[And why do you say then that it is 2.5?]

Teresa: *Porque, o sea, quizás mi nivel está hasta bien, pero yo no, como que no lo practico y no sé.*
 [Because, I mean, maybe my level is good, but I don't, like I don't practice it and I don't know.] (Teresa, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019).

Teresa scored her English-language writing harshly. She perceived her English-language writing level to be below acceptable and lower than what a standardized language test (WIDA) indicated. She argued that her English-language writing skills were not as good as the test suggested because she did not practice writing in English. This suggests that Teresa conceived writing in English as something that people had to practice in order to be good at it. That is, she seemed to view writing as a skill that was mastered through practice, and she restated this view in other informal interviews at the beginning of the program. Teresa added that her (perceived) lack of practice and knowledge of writing in English made her feel apprehensive about English-language writing.

Given the youth's lack of confidence on their English-language writing skills, it is understandable that they avoided writing in English. They said they only wrote in English when they had to do so for school assignments and when they were trying to communicate with someone who did not speak Spanish. Pamela clearly explained this position in the first interview:

Yo escribo en inglés en la clase de inglés, nomás, creo, o para las tareas. [... Pero] a veces, si hay una persona de la escuela [en Facebook] que no habla español y él me está escribiendo en inglés, entonces le contesto en inglés, o lo que yo sé se lo pongo, o si no, me voy y escribo [en el traductor], uh, cómo se dice esta palabra, y la pongo ahí [en Facebook]. Pero si yo sé que el chico habla español, entonces no le voy a escribir en inglés.

[I write in English only in English class, I think, or to do homework. [... But] sometimes, if there is a person from the school [on Facebook] who does not speak

Spanish and he is writing to me in English, I answer then in English, or I write down it what I know, or if no, I go [on the translator], and write, uh, how do you say this word, and then I write it there [on Facebook]. But if I know that the guy speaks Spanish, then I am not going to write to him in English.] (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019).

Pamela's comments also show she, like other youth, tried to write in English "as little as possible" ("*lo más mínimo*") and mainly in response to class requirements or English speakers. The focal youth rarely wrote in English to people who were fluent in Spanish because "it would take [them] a while to figure out how to write what [they] wanted to say in English [...] and it would be faster and easier to write it in Spanish" ("*nos demoraríamos en saber cómo escribir lo que queremos decir en inglés [...] sería más rápido y fácil escribirlo en español*") (Fieldnotes, March 3, 2019).

The focal youth wrote in English to Spanish speakers in very rare cases and for very particular reasons. Teresa shared, for example, that she sometimes talked and texted in English with her best friend—who was also a NLHS—when she did not want Spanish-speaking people around her to understand what they were saying. However, outside of using English for schoolwork or to communicate with non-Spanish or bilingual English-Spanish, the focal youth wrote in Spanish most of the time. Yet, they acknowledged that, by not writing or writing as little as possible in English, they missed opportunities to practice and learn English.

The focal youth preferred to write in Spanish, which they considered to be "easy," and they were very confident in their Spanish-language writing skills. Nany, for instance, stated in the pre-program interview that she was "*muy buena para escribir en español*" [very good at writing in Spanish] and had "*ninguna dificultad para escribir en español porque lo aprendí muy bien en mi país*" [no difficulty writing in Spanish because I

learned it very well in my home country] (Nany, Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). Like Nany, the other three focal youth claimed they had no difficulties writing in Spanish, they had learned in their home countries. And, because they believed they wrote “well” in Spanish, they were not apprehensive about writing in Spanish. Further, all the focal youth reported enjoying writing in Spanish, even when it was part of a written assignment (e.g., creating poems and autobiographies for Spanish class). The focal youth’s opinions on Spanish-language writing indicate—as other researchers (e.g., Rubinstein-Ávila, 2007) have argued—that there is a relationship between NLHSs’ ideas about writing and their previous writing experiences in their home countries.

In fact, I noticed that the youth’s conceptions of writing were oftentimes based on what they learned or experienced at school in their home countries. Andrés, for example, took “basic” Spanish-language classes in his home country, where he said he “did not write or learn much.” In the pre-program interview, he defined writing as “having good handwriting and spelling” (Formal interview #1, February 19, 2019); he did not state that writing could be a creative or analytic tool. By contrast, Teresa and Nany had been enrolled in “advanced” Spanish-language classes, where they wrote literary texts (e.g., poems and short stories) and analytic texts (e.g., literary analysis essays and book reviews), before moving to the US. They were the first two focal youth who alluded to the notions that writing could be a creative outlet (“a way to express yourself”) or an analytic tool (“something that helps you think or analyze.”)

Despite differences in their conceptions of writing, the four focal youth reported engaging in Spanish-language writing in similar ways: they used Spanish-language writing in- and out-of-school to build or maintain social ties with Spanish-speaking

people. They wrote, for example, numerous daily messages in Spanish (via social media and instant messaging app, such as WhatsApp) to friends, relatives, and acquaintances in the US and in their home countries. Nany and Teresa also said they had written love letters in Spanish to their significant others.

In addition, Andrés, Nany, and Teresa reported writing private/personal notes in Spanish to get feelings off their chests (“*para desahogarse*”). For example, Nany commented: “*a veces cuando estoy triste, cuando ya me cansé de llorar, me pongo a escribir. A veces, escribo todo lo que quizás siento y cuando ya lo vuelvo a leer, siento que, que vuelvo a suspirar, dar un suspiro normal, y decir: ‘Todo está bien.’*”

[Sometimes when I’m sad, when I’m tired of crying, I start writing. Sometimes, I write everything that I may feel and, when I read it again, I feel that, that I can sigh again, give a normal sigh, and say, ‘Everything is fine.’] (Formal interview #1, February 22, 2019). As Nany’s quote shows, Spanish-language writing may have helped some youth express and process their emotions. I interpreted this use of writing as transformational because writing is employed as a tool to convey and alter emotions. The transformational conception and use of writing were reinforced during the PAR program.

During the program.

During the program, the youth coresearchers had many opportunities to use writing in various ways and for distinct purposes. I found that the focal youth’s writing conceptions during the program varied depending on the kind of writing activities in which they engaged. To contextualize NLHSs’ conceptions of writing during the program, I shall first outline the writing activities that unfolded during the program. I then describe how the youth coresearchers and I redefined writing during the program.

Based on the youth coresearchers' main reasons for writing during the program, I initially classified the program writing activities¹¹ into four groups. In the first group of activities, the youth wrote to reflect on their experiences or express their feelings. These activities often involved writing reflections in response to prompts that I gave them (e.g., "how did you feel in today's session?" and "what would change about the program sessions?") or writing about anything they wanted, especially regarding the research process or the program. They wrote these reflective/emotional texts on a Google doc or on a physical piece of paper. They could choose with whom and how (if at all) they wanted shared those texts.

In the second set of activities, the youth wrote because they wanted to keep record of what they were learning in the program or of ideas they had for their research projects. These activities usually entailed taking notes on a physical notebook during the program sessions. In the third group of activities, the youth wrote to collect or analyze data. Examples of this third group of activities were writing interview protocols, taking analytic notes during and after interviews, and transcribing the interviews. In the last set of activities, the youth wrote to share their study with others; these activities typically involved creating the scripts and multimodal compositions (e.g., PowerPoint slides and posters) through which the youth could explain their studies and convey their findings to particular audiences.

Theoretically, most of the PAR-based writing activities could lead to the transformation of knowledge, reinforce a transformational conception of writing, and develop critical literacy. Drawing on Scardamalia and Bereiter's (1987) knowledge

¹¹ The writing activities and texts were done in English, Spanish, or both.

transforming model of writing, I—and other researchers— could have speculated that the youth coresearchers would conceive and approach all the program writing activities as opportunities to present information in order to achieve their personal purposes and (re)generate knowledge. We could have also expected that the activities supported the youth in strengthening a transformational conception of writing or to further develop along the four dimensions of critical literacy—i.e., disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, addressing sociopolitical issues, or using writing to promote social action (Lewison et al., 2002).

However, the focal youth did not perceive or enjoy all the activities equally. Overall, they preferred writing for reflection and research dissemination over writing for record keeping and data analysis. Three of the focal youth (Andrés, Nany, and Teresa) viewed transcribing interviews as a time-consuming, but necessary task. Andrés, for example, commented:

Angélica: *¿Cuáles fueron los mayores retos o dificultades que enfrentaste durante el proceso de investigación?*

[What were the biggest challenges or difficulties you faced during the investigation process?]

Andrés: *Transcribir la entrevista. Fue muy—un poco— difícil. No, no es tan difícil, sino que requiere mucha paciencia y dedicarle bastante tiempo porque uno tiene que escribir palabra por palabra, y entonces, eso como que, no sé, lo hace sentir a uno de que ya no quiere seguir, de que mejor no lo hubiera hecho. Pero eso ya es casi el final, así que tiene que terminarla.*

[Transcribing the interview. It was very — a little— difficult. No, it is not too difficult, but it requires a lot of patience and a lot of time because one has to write word for word, and then, it's like, I don't know, it makes one feel that one doesn't want to continue anymore, like I shouldn't have done it. But that is almost the end, so you have to finish it.]

Angélica: *[Risa] ¿Y tú crees que es útil transcribir las entrevistas?*

[[Laughter] And do you think that it is useful to transcribe the interviews?]

Andrés: *Sí.*

- [Yes.]
 Angélica: *¿Por qué?*
 [Why?]
 Andrés: *Para tener evidencia de qué es lo que dijo y en qué segundo lo dijo.*
 [To have evidence of what was said and in what second was said.]
 (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

As Andrés' statements illustrate, the youth did not enjoy transcribing (and similar recordkeeping activities) because they were time-consuming and did not leave too much room for creativity. Yet they recognized that recordkeeping activities were a way to document important information and gather evidence of their findings. They intimated that sometimes they needed to “copy” or “register” other people's information to accomplish their own goals and transform others' thinking. That is, the youth seem to believe that recordkeeping (or reproductive writing) might sometimes be a necessary for social transformation. The youth's recognition of the value of recordkeeping activities encouraged them to complete these time-consuming writing tasks.

In contrast to the youths' displeasure with transcribing (and keeping record of others' viewpoints), they cherished opportunities to express themselves and craft their own texts. Nany and Pamela affirmed that they liked writing the weekly reflections because they gave them freedom to write about their feelings and, in doing so, help themselves and others. For example, in the second interview, when I asked Nany “What were the things you liked to write the most [in the program] and why?”, she shared: *Lo que más me gustaron fue las reflexiones, porque ahí es donde nos basamos qué fue—qué es lo que podía ayudar y qué es lo que podíamos hacer por otras personas.* [What I liked the most was the reflections, because that's where we found the basis of what was — of what could help and what we could do for other people.] (Nany, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019). Pamela answered that same question similarly:

Creo que las cosas que más me gustaron escribir era escribir como me sentía o qué quería mejorar, o qué podíamos hacer para que fuera diferente y no sentirnos que estamos siguiendo, uh, un mismo patrón; entonces era como sentir esa libertad de poder expresar lo que sentía en ese momento, escribiendo. [...] Es como una forma de poner a trabajar tu mente, y, y decir: “Esto que hicimos hoy, uh, no me gustó”, o recordar lo que sentimos en ese momento, entonces fue como una forma de plasmar en un cuaderno escribiendo lo que sentíamos en nuestra mente.

[I think that the ones I liked most about writing was writing how I felt or what I wanted to improve, or what we could do to make it different and not feel that we are following, uh, the same pattern; it was then like feeling that freedom to express what I felt at the time, writing. [...] It’s like a way to put your mind to work, and, and say, “What we did today, uh, I didn’t like it,” or remember what we felt at the time, it was then like a way to capture in a notebook writing what we felt in our mind.] (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Noteworthy is that Nany and Pamela mentioned that the written reflections allowed them to think about what they could *do*. They used these writing opportunities not only to express their thoughts and describe what was happening but also to begin considering how to enact agency and transform their realities. That is, these activities encouraged the youth to use and conceive writing as a transformational enterprise, through which they could build on their experiences to propose changes and re-write their worlds (cf. Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Another writing process that the youth greatly enjoyed and allowed them to express themselves was creating multimodal compositions. Teresa shared: *“Las cosas que más me gustaron escribir [en el programa] fue nuestro póster, nuestro póster final, porque pudimos poner como resumido toda la información que teníamos. Nos quedó bien bonito; pudimos poner bullet points y me gustó.”* [“The things that I liked to write the most [in the program] was our poster, our final poster, because we could put like a summary of all the information we had. We made it very pretty; we could put bullet

points and I liked it.” (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019). Likewise, Andrés commented:

Las cosas que más me gustaron [escribir en el programa], bueno, el póster y el collage [...] El póster tenía toda la información literalmente resumida, toda la investigación, y eso era lo que me gustaba del póster. Pero tuve más creatividad con las fotos del collage. No sé, a mí me gusta bastante la creatividad del collage.

The things I liked the most [to write in the program], well, the poster and the collage [...] The poster had all the information literally summarized, all the research, and that was what I liked about the poster. But I had more creativity with the collage photos. I don't know, I really like the creativity of collage. (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

The above excerpts suggest that what the youth liked about creating the multimodal compositions was putting together the information they had collected through their studies and crafting their own texts. Unlike transcribing and record keeping, creating multimodal compositions allowed them to express their viewpoints and generate something on their own. Therefore, it seemed to me that a link existed between multimodal composing activities and a transformational writing conception and between record keeping activities and a reproductive writing conception.

The youth and I further refined our writing conceptions as we designed and talked about multimodal compositions. The refinement process started in Session 8, when I asked the youth (individually and as a whole group) to reflect on the types of writing they had done during the program. The youth gave multiple answers, but what intrigued me the most was their idea that writing personal reflections was different from writing verbatim transcriptions of interviews. Then, as I examined their comments and my fieldnotes, I realized that the youth and I were making a tacit distinction between “composing” and “writing.” Drawing on the implicit beliefs model (explained in Chapter

2), I speculated that this distinction was based on our epistemological, yet unacknowledged conceptions of writing.

To clarify this issue, in the following session (Session 9) I probed the teenagers to discuss, as a whole group, the meaning of writing and composing. During that discussion (which is analyzed in-depth while answering RQ3), the youth came to define *composing* as a process of “putting something together” or “authoring” something—which stood in contrast to *writing*, defined as copying “something that doesn’t have to be yours.” (Fieldnotes, May 8, 2019). In other words, whereas *writing* could entail replicating information or texts, *composing* always involved presenting your own perspective, transforming information, and creating “your own” text. From their perspective, writing was mainly a reproductive activity, and composing was a transformational activity. The youth upheld this distinction even after the program ended, as discussed below.

After the program.

Although I cannot claim that the PAR process caused radical changes in the youth researchers’ writing conceptions and engagement, I must note that some youth linked their participation in the program activities to shifts in how they viewed or used writing. More precisely, through and after the program, the focal youth re-affirmed or developed the belief that writing and composing are related, yet distinct processes. After the program ended, most of the focal youth also reported increasing their engagement in certain writing activities and underscored the notion that writing was a powerful tool to express themselves and transform their worlds. I argue that the youth strengthened transformational beliefs of writing during and after the program.

As I mentioned earlier, the youth co-researchers and I explicitly drew a distinction between writing and composing in the ninth session of the PAR program. The four focal youth continued distinguishing between those two terms after the end of the program, as the following post-program interview excerpts show:

Angélica: *¿Tú crees que hay alguna diferencia entre componer y escribir?*

[Do you think there is a difference between composing and writing?]

Pamela: *Creo que sí. [...] Escribir es algo que podemos—cualquier cosa podemos escribir, pero componer es algo de nosotros, algo que nosotros creemos [...] Escribir, este, es como que vaya a un libro y copie lo que estoy viendo; en cambio, componer es algo que voy a pensar antes de escribir. Es algo que voy a meditar, antes de escribirlo. El escribir nomás va a ser solo copiar lo que veo; el componer va a ser pensarlo, analizarlo y luego escribir.*

I think so. [...] Writing is like something we can — anything we can write, but composing is something that is ours, something we believe in. [...] Writing is like going to a book and copying what I am seeing. But composing is something I would have to think about before writing it. It's something I'm going to meditate on before writing it. Writing would be just copying what I see; composing would require thinking, analyzing and then writing. (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Angélica: *¿cuál es la diferencia entre componer y escribir?*

[What is the difference between composing and writing?]

Nany: *Ah, escribir creo que es como escribir lo primero que usted piense, o lo que le dicen que escriba, o lo que está escuchando, o lo que—no sé. Pero componer es como usar, usar algo como para describir bien un solo tema. Para componer, usted tiene que pensar qué exactamente va a escribir.*

[Oh, writing I think it's like writing the first thing you think of, or what they tell you to write, or what you're listening to, or what— I don't know. But composing is like using, using something like to describe well a single topic. To compose, you have to think exactly what you are going to write.] (Nany, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Nany and Pamela's descriptions of writing and composing share several commonalities and exemplify how the focal youth conceived these terms. The teens agreed that composing differed from writing in that the former always required “thinking” and “giving something from you.” That is, the youth associated the term

composing with conveying their own ideas (rather than others') and crafting unique personal texts. By contrast, they upheld that writing did not necessarily involve creating anything new or presenting their own thinking; instead, writing could mean "copying" information or ideas from other authors or sources. Thus, while the notion of "composing" seemed to be closely tied to a transformational conception and use, the construct of "writing" was mainly associated with a reproductive conception and use.

Like Nany's and Pamela's, Teresa's definition of "composing" was akin to a transformational conception of writing. During a post-program interview, Teresa affirmed that "*componer es como escribir sobre algo que uno piensa, pero en una forma como creativa*" [composing is like writing about something that you think, but in a creative way] (Teresa, member check interview, November 11, 2019). In her definition of composing, Teresa alludes to two key features of a transformational conception of writing. On one hand, she highlights the epistemic value of writing/composing when she argues that you can write about you think and know. On the other hand, she refers to the notion that writing involves transforming ideas and information, as she claims that composing/writing has to be done in a "creative way." In other words, according to Teresa, composing goes beyond repeating or transmitting information in a predetermined way. That is, composing is a type of writing that must transcend reproduction; it is a transformational activity.

However, three focal youth (Nany, Pamela, and Teresa) recognized that writing activities were sometimes necessary for or related to composing processes. They argued that in the program, for example, they had to engage in writing activities (e.g., transcribing) in order to collect the evidence needed for composing multimodal texts:

“Hacer los posters lleva escritura porque tenemos que tener evidencias, pero también lleva composición porque nosotros pudimos como decorar [el póster] y ponerle las cosas como que nos gustaban para también transmitir nuestro mensaje.” [Making the posters involves writing because we have to have evidence, but it also involves composition because we were able to decorate [the poster] and put things that we liked to convey our message.] (Teresa, member check interview, November 11, 2019). Put differently, the youth believed that sometimes they needed to use writing to replicate or keep track of certain information in order to transform the information and convey their own messages. Although these comments suggest that the youth perceived a relation between reproduction and transformation, the existing literature says little about the connection between reproductive and transformational conceptions of writing.

Still, overall, the youth coresearchers’ insights seem to corroborate prior research (e.g., White & Bruning, 2005) that indicates a transformational conception and use of writing helps improve students’ writing engagement. Also, because the youth drew (or reinforced) the distinction between writing and composing as they participated in the various types of writing activities in the program, it seems feasible that students’ participation in different writing activities can shape their writing conceptions (cf. Villalón et al., 2015). I further discuss these points in the conclusion chapter.

In addition, after the program, the focal youth also reported important changes in how much they enjoyed writing and how they approached writing activities (in and out of school.) Two of the focal coresearchers shared that they liked writing more after participating in the program. For example, Teresa commented:

Angélica: *Después de este programa, ¿te gusta escribir, más menos o igual que antes?*

- [After this program, do you like to write, more or less than before?]
- Teresa: *Después de este programa, me gusta escribir más porque ahora sé de qué para poner información muy importante no es necesario escribir mucho. Sino que, con palabras cortas, o frases se puede hacer, se puede dar como un mensaje.*
 [After this program, I like to write more because now I know that in order to put very important information it is not necessary to write too much. But with short words, or phrases, it can be done, a message can be given.]
- Angélica: *¿Antes tú pensabas que tocaba siempre escribir mucho?*
 [Before you thought you always had to write a lot?]
- Teresa: *Eh, pensaba que como para dar la información muy amplia, era necesario como escribir mucho.*
 [Uh, I thought that to give a lot of information, it was necessary like to write a lot] (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Teresa not only affirmed that she liked writing more after the program but also suggested she had changed the way she saw writing. That is, she indicated a prior belief that informational writing had to be lengthy, but throughout the program she learned that the same messages could be delivered more concisely.

Two other focal youth shared that they felt more confident in their writing skills after participating in the program. For example, Andrés said he felt more comfortable writing in English because he thought his writing skills had improved during the program:

- Angélica: *¿Cómo te sientes con la escritura en español y en inglés, después del programa?*
 [How do you feel about writing in Spanish and English after the program?]
- Andrés: *Siempre me he sentido cómodo en español, pero ahora me siento más cómodo en inglés.*
 [I have always felt comfortable in Spanish, but now I feel more comfortable in English.]
- Angélica: *¿Por qué?*
 [Why?]
- Andrés: *Porque he aprendido [en el programa] ciertas maneras de escribir para que las cosas que tengan un poco más de sentido y a mejorar un poco mi gramática.*

[Because I have learned [in the program] certain ways of writing to make things make more sense, and I have improved my grammar a bit.] (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

In the last formal interviews, two focal youth coresearchers also reported that the program had encouraged them to write more. For instance, Pamela said that, during the program, she realized she “could not remember everything” (“*no podía recordar todo*”) and that writing was “a good way to remember things” (*[escribir] “es una buena forma de acordarme”*). Because of that realization, she began writing more things down (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019). In other words, she increased her understanding and use of writing as a “recordkeeping” tool.

Likewise, Teresa commented that she had started taking more written notes because during the program and the research process she had learned that “all data are important”:

Teresa: *Ahora [después del programa] tomo como más notas. Como cuando estoy en la clase y hay algo importante, siempre tomo como una nota o algo. Cuando estoy en una reunión, siempre voy anotando como las cosas que me pueden servir después.*

[Now [after the program] I take more notes. Like when I am in class and there is something important, I always write down a note or something. When I am in a meeting, I’m always writing down like the things that can help me later.]

Angélica: *¿Y por qué haces eso más ahora?*

[And why do you do that more now?]

Teresa: *Porque todos los datos son importantes. [Risa]*

[Because all the data are important. [Laughter]]

Angélica: *¿Y dónde aprendiste eso?*

[And where did you learn that?]

Teresa: *De la investigación, de este grupo, porque hemos aprendido que todo, hasta lo más mínimo, importa.*

[From our research, from this group, because we have learned that everything, even the smallest thing, matters.] (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Furthermore, both Teresa and Pamela claimed that during and after the program they were writing more about their feelings than before the program. Although they had different prior experiences and ideas about emotional writing, they came to conceive of and do this kind of writing in a similar way. In the first formal interview, Pamela said that she did not write about her personal emotions; by contrast, Teresa said she had several notebooks in which she wrote about her daily experiences and feelings. Yet, by the end of the program, the two girls reported increasing their engagement in emotional writing and their views about this kind of writing became similar.

Pamela described how she changed her ideas about emotional writing during the last formal interview:

Angélica: *Tú me habías dicho que ahora [después del programa] escribes como lo que sientes. ¿Empezaste a escribir lo que sientes cuando empezaste el programa?*

[You had told me that now [after the program] you write about how you feel. Did you start writing about how you feel when you started the program?]

Pamela: *Sí. [...] Creo que fue hasta después [de empezar el programa]. A veces, siento ideas y escribo cosas. [...] A veces cuando me pongo triste, escribo. O, este, hago como una canción de alabanza o algo así de que me gustaría cantarla.*

[Yes. [...] I think it was until after [the beginning of the program]. Sometimes, I feel ideas and write things. [...] Sometimes when I get sad, I write. Or, I create like a worship song or something like that I would like to sing.]

Angélica: *¿Y por qué empezaste a escribir esas cosas?*

[And why did you start writing those things?]

Pamela: *Es como una forma de darme ánimo creo. De escribir que—es como si alguien más me lo escribiera, y al leerlo como que me da alientos, algo, algo así.*

[It's like a way of encouraging myself, I think. To write that — it's as if someone else was writing it to me, and reading it as if it gives me encouragement, something, something like that.]

Angélica: *Ajá. ¿Y cómo se te ocurrió la idea de empezar a escribir esas cosas?*

[Mm-hm. And how did you come up with the idea of starting to write those things?]

- Pamela: *Porque siento que cuando me siento triste, este, escribir es una buena forma de expresarme, y es como el programa.*
[Because I feel like when I feel sad, writing is a good way to express myself, and it's like the program.]
- Angélica: *¿Como el programa? ¿Por qué?*
[Like the program? Why?]
- Pamela: *Porque usted decía [en las sesiones del programa]: “Escriban como se sienten o lo que les gustaría cambiar”. Y como que me di cuenta de que escribir es como una forma de expresar nuestros sentimientos sin hablar.*
[Because you used to say [in the program sessions]: ‘Write how you feel or what you would like to change.’ And I kind of realized that writing is like a way to express our feelings without speaking. (Pamela, Formal interview # 2, June 13, 2019).]

Pamela also commented during that interview that she had begun using writing outside of the program as a way to express emotions because she wanted to see if writing about emotions was as helpful as other coresearchers had said. After doing this kind of writing several times, she said she found it helped her feel better. For that reason, she continued doing it and created a special notebook where she wrote down her feelings or inspirational quotes—which were related to the Bible or retrieved from social media. By the end of the program, Pamela appeared to firmly believe that writing was a good way to express her emotions, give her opinions, and suggest possible changes. These ideas are clearly aligned with a transformational conception of writing.

Although Pamela expressed some similar ideas about writing at the beginning of the program, her initial conceptions of writing were not directly related to transformation or social change. Recall that, in the first formal interview, Pamela claimed that writing was “using your hand and a pen to make a mark on a paper” or “a way of expressing yourself, a way of speaking without using your voice, or a way of trying to be heard by others” (Pamela, Formal interview #1, March 20, 2019). In her initial definition, she suggested writing could be a means of expression, but she did not explicitly mention that

it could be useful to express and change her feelings or her world. In contrast, at the end of the program, she underscored that writing helped her alter her mood or feelings and referred to the possibility that she could use writing to promote social changes. For example, in one of the last PAR sessions, she told me that she wanted to present her multimodal compositions (a poster and a short film) at her church because those compositions may help adult churchgoers better understand how the youth felt about and reacted to life changes; this increased understanding, she argued, could in turn improve adult-youth relationships at church and at home (Fieldnotes, May 22, 2019).. It, therefore, appears that Pamela cultivated her incipient transformational ideas of writing through the program; she realized (or perhaps confirmed) that writing could be a tool to transform her emotions and social circumstances.

This change in Pamela's writing conceptions might have also affected how she engaged with writing. According to Ms. Arguer, Pamela's English teacher, "Pamela, who is reluctant to speak [in English], became extremely expressive in her written language, and I saw a lot of improvement in her writing this semester" (Ms. Arguer, Formal interview #2, June 14, 2019). Thus, it is plausible that, as Pamela tried to express her emotions and ideas through writing during the program, she discovered the power of this type of writing and began incorporating more expressive language in her academic writing, which her teacher viewed as a writing development.

Like Pamela, Teresa believed writing helped her change negative feelings by "getting stuff of her chest":

Teresa: *Ahora, también escribo más sobre mis sentimientos [...]*
 [Now, I also write more about my feelings [...]]

Angélica: *Ah, sí, tú me habías dicho [en la primera entrevista] que tenías un cuaderno donde escribías muchas cosas, sentimientos, y consejos a ti*

misma. ¿Has hecho eso más ahora [después del programa] que antes [del programa]?

[Oh, yes, you had told me [in the first interview] that you had a notebook where you wrote many things, feelings, and advice to yourself. Have you done that more now [after the program] than before [the program]?)

Teresa: *Sí, porque siento que es una manera como cuando uno se siente mal, como desahogarse. Y es algo que también pudimos ver en la investigación de “La tristeza de los estudiantes”.*

[Yes, because I feel that it is a way like to get stuff off your chest when one feels bad. And it is something that we could also see in the “Students’ sadness research.”]

Angélica: *Oh, ¿entonces, esa investigación te motivó a seguir escribiendo?*

[Oh, did that research motivate you to keep writing?]

Teresa: *Mm-hm, sí.*

[Mm-hm, yes.]

Angélica: *¿O es que has estado más triste porque escribes más?*

[Or have you written more because you have been sadder?]

Teresa: *No, no, he estado menos triste. [Risa] Pero escribo más porque no todo—no solamente cuando uno está triste puede escribir; también uno puede escribir como cuando se siente feliz o cuando algo bueno le pasa.*

[No, no, I’ve been less sad. [Laughter] But I write more because not everything — you don’t have to be sad to write; You can also write like when you feel happy or when something good happens to you.]

(Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Teresa reaffirmed her initial belief that writing could alter her feelings. She also found additional reasons to continue engaging in emotional writing through the program and her peers’ research, which suggests that some students can reduce their sadness when they write about their “bad feelings.” Interestingly, Teresa not only continued writing about her bad feelings but also began writing about the “good things” and when she was happy, which was uncommon among the other focal youth.

Thus, after the program, Teresa expanded her transformational understanding and use of emotional writing. She came to believe that writing could be used as a tool to overcome negative feelings and remind herself of positive things or feelings. She argued that, by writing about her positive feelings and experiences, she felt “even better” and

that, by later re-reading her notes about her “happy days or moments,” she felt “good again” (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019). That is, Teresa recognized that it was helpful to read and write about both positive and negative emotions or experiences. After the program, Teresa conceived writing as a way to process or change negative emotions as well as a tool to further enhance her current positive experiences and later boost her mood (when she re-read her emotional notes). Simply put, Teresa increased her awareness of the how emotional writing could positively affect her emotions and experiences.

Compared to Teresa and Pamela’s, Andrés and Nany’s emotional writing changed in a different way. Andrés and Nany reported that they used to write a lot about their negative emotions before the program; yet, they claimed that they had stopped doing it because they did not feel “bad enough” to write their emotions down. From their perspective, different to Teresa’s, they only wrote when they felt “bad” or “sad,” not when they were feeling “happy” or “good.”

In sum, the participating youth shifted some of their conceptions of writing during the program. At the beginning of the process, they perceived writing as a manual act, a way to record and remember information, or a form of expression/communication, and they had some negative dispositions towards writing at school (especially, in English). But, during the program, they increased their confidence in their writing skills and came to see writing as a powerful tool to express themselves and transform their worlds. In other words, through the program, the teenagers further developed a transformational conception of writing. In the next section, I examine how particular aspects of the PAR process shaped the focal youth’s conceptions of writing.

3. What Aspects of the PAR Process Impacted NLHSS' Conceptions of Writing and How?

As discussed above, I identified three key changes in the youth's conceptions of writing during the PAR program. First, most of the focal youth refined their initial ideas of writing by drawing a distinction between writing and composing in a way that was akin to the difference between reproductive and transformational conceptions writing. Second, the four focal youth started to consider or reaffirmed that writing/composing was a transformational process—which suggests their transformational conceptions of writing were strengthened through the program. Third, Teresa and Pamela reported increasing their engagement with writing/composing.

I sought to comprehend how those three changes were related to specific aspects of the PAR process while analyzing the data. I first reviewed the youth's post-program interview transcripts and looked for excerpts where the youth discussed the impact of PAR on their writing. I paid special attention to their responses to the question “How, if at all, did the program influence your writing?” (which is question 11c in the post-program interview protocol for the youth coresearchers, see Appendix K.) I then coded the excerpts using the youth's own terms (e.g., “having freedom to choose and learn;” “knowing what people think”) and/or theoretical constructs (e.g., “agency” and “funds of knowledge”) that represented the PAR aspect mentioned. Next, I performed data triangulation; I compared the aspects discussed in the youth's post-program interviews with aspects mentioned in other data sources (i.e., teacher interviews, fieldnotes, and memos/journal entries.)

As I triangulated the data, I refined codes and identified patterns—often drawing on my conceptual framework. For example, three of the focal youth stated in the interviews that their ideas about writing had changed because I had “taught [them] things about writing” they did not know. Borrowing from the literature on writing, I had initially labeled that aspect “receiving explicit writing instruction.” I found allusions to that idea in my fieldnotes and the teacher post-program interviews. Subsequently, as I studied all data concerning that idea in the light of my framework, I realized the key aspect was not that the teens received instruction (as in the a banking model of education), but rather they co-constructed knowledge with others—including me— through talk/dialogue (which is a main tenet of both critical pedagogy and SCT, sociocultural theory.) Hence, “talk/dialogue” became an important theme in my data analysis. And, upon a deeper revision of both the data and the existing literature, I conceptualized my writing-focused conversations with the youth as “dialogic talks” and discovered that this type of talks could shape the youth’s writing conceptions (I explain this point later).

As a whole, my data analysis indicated that three aspects of PAR had an impact on the youth’s conceptions of writing/composing: (a) youth-centeredness, (b) novel writing opportunities, and (c) dialogic talk. Although these three aspects are intertwined in reality, in this section I explain each aspect separately for the sake of clarity. Ultimately, I will link my analysis to the reviewed literature on writing and PAR. However, the bulk of the discussion on my analysis vis-à-vis prior scholarship appears in the conclusion chapter.

Youth-centeredness.

By definition, PAR is a process centered on the experiences and interests of the population under study (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Mirra et al., 2016). Therefore, my NLHS coresearchers constituted the core of this PAR project. I encouraged youth coresearchers to take the lead in all the phases of PAR process (including topic selection, research design, and dissemination) so they could better understand and use their agency— i.e., their capacity to act and transform reality. I found that allowing the youth to spearhead the research and writing processes shaped how they conceived writing.

More precisely, my analysis showed the youth's writing conceptions shifted as they researched and wrote about topics that personally interested *them* (rather than the adults). Because they were interested in the research topic, they were more engaged in conducting and writing about their research projects than when they had to research and write about a teacher-assigned topic. Andrés' comments (included below) shed light on the relation between the youth's writing conceptions and PAR's emphasis on their interests:

Angélica: *Ayer tú me dijiste que [tú y Teresa] habían pensado que yo les iba a dar los temas, y que ustedes iban a investigar lo que yo dijera, y que les había sorprendido que ustedes podían escoger cualquier tema, ¿verdad?*

[Yesterday you told me that [you and Teresa] had thought that I was going to give you the topics and that you were going to investigate what I told you, and that you had been surprised to know you could choose any subject, right?]

Andrés: *Sí.*
[Yes.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué les sorprendió tanto que ustedes pudieran escoger los temas?*
[Why were you so surprised that you could choose the topics?]

Andrés: *Porque el programa era nuevo para todos, y todos ya estábamos acostumbrados a lo básico, que es el maestro anota el tema, nosotros*

lo investigamos y ya. Entonces, pensamos que estaba vez iba a ser igual, quiero decir, porque nunca habíamos tenido la experiencia de estar en un grupo de investigación antes.

[Because the program was new for everyone, and we were all used to the basics, which is the teacher writes down a topic, we investigated it, and that's it. So, we thought it was going to be the same this time, I mean, because we had never had the experience of being in a research group before.]

Angélica: *¿Y qué te parece que hubiera sido mejor: que ustedes escogieran el tema ustedes o que les hubiera asignado un tema?*

[And what do you think would have been better: to choose a topic or to be assigned a topic?]

Andrés: *Escoger el tema nosotros.*

[To choose the topic ourselves.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué?*

[Why?]

Andrés: *Porque algunas veces cuando se nos asigna un tema, no nos sentimos del todo cómodos, entonces eso pone un poco de dificultad.*

[Because sometimes when we are assigned a topic, we are not totally comfortable, so that adds some difficulty.]

Angélica: *¿Por qué no te sientes cómodo cuando te dan el tema?*

[Why don't you feel comfortable when you are assigned the topic?]

Andrés: *Porque algunas veces simplemente no es del interés de uno o hay una parte que es muy difícil de investigar. Y hacer algo que a uno no le interesa no siempre lo va a salir haciendo bien.*

[Because sometimes it [the topic] is simply not of one's interest or there is a part that is very difficult to investigate. And doing something that does not interest you will not always work out well.]

Angélica: *Mm-hm. O sea, tú crees que lo hiciste mejor porque era un tema que te interesaba a ti.*

[Mm-hm. So, you think you did better because it was an issue that interested you.]

Andrés: *Sí.*

[Yes.]

Angélica: *¿Tú crees que en la escuela tienen bastante libertad de escoger los temas que les toca estudiar o no?*

[Do you think that in school they have enough freedom to choose the topics you have to study or not?]

Andrés: *No.*

[No.]

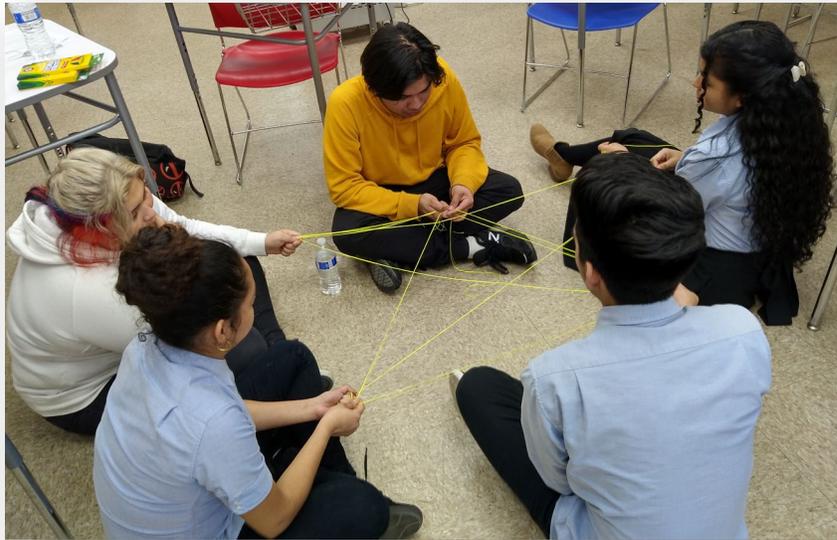
Angélica: *¿Por qué?*

[Why?]

Andrés: *Porque ellos, los maestros, ya tienen lo que nos van a enseñar, entonces nos tenemos que mantener a ese margen. No nos podemos salir de lo que ellos ya están programados a enseñarnos.*

[Because they, the teachers, already have what they are going to teach us, so we have to stay within that margin. We cannot get out of what they are already programmed to teach us.] (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

As Andrés intimated, studying a topic of their interest made the youth feel more engaged in the PAR process (including, its writing activities.) Through PAR, the youth researchers could investigate and talk about topics that were important to them, but beyond “the margins” of the official school curriculum. For example, in a PAR activity (depicted below), the youth coresearchers engaged in a deep, honest, analytical conversation –or genuine dialogue— about their schooling experiences in their home countries and in the US. As they listened to others, they drew tangible connections (with a yellow yarn) among their experiences. This activity, inspired by Morgan and Wyatt-Smith (2004), allowed the youth to identify common themes in their experiences (e.g., sadness, discrimination, and bullying) that could be researched in the PAR process. These themes were seldom openly discussed in the youth’s classes but were important to them. Thus, PAR allowed the youth to explore issues and engage in actions that transcended the social orders and norms of school (cf. McLaren, 1994, 2015).



Further, because the focal youth wrote about their preferred topics (rather than on adult/teacher-assigned topics) in the PAR process, they developed or reaffirmed the belief that writing was a personally relevant activity and tool. They came to view and use writing as a way to reflect on issues of their interest and to express their opinions and feelings about those issues. They also realized that they could use writing and their written compositions to get other people (especially, adults) interested in those issues and perhaps change others' opinion (I discuss this point in more detail later in this chapter). In other words, they comprehended that they could think, act, and spur social change through writing; they saw writing as a way to transform their ideas and others' (i.e., a transformational conception of writing). Thus, by being allowed to explore and talk about a topic of their interest (through research and writing), the focal youth came to conceive of and utilize writing as a tool for agency and social transformation. This new approach to writing seemed to have, in turn, made the youth more "comfortable" and engaged with writing.

Interestingly, the two participating teachers also underscored the importance of letting the youth choose topics of their interest. Ms. Arguer, for instance, commented: “I think that when they [the students] are able to choose a topic that they will be more invested and I think it may enhance their comprehension of what they present, versus being given, you know, a prompt” (Ms. Arguer, Formal interview #2, June 14, 2019). Similarly, Mr. Silentio affirmed that, because the youth coresearchers were focused on “things they cared about,” they were more likely to do “challenging or difficult things” like creating the posters and “doing presentations in classrooms that have peers that aren’t their friends” (Ms. Silentio, Formal interview #2, June 14, 2019). So, in sum, the teachers acknowledged that the youth increased their engagement in the PAR process (including its writing-related activities) because the process was centered on the youth’s interests and concerns.

Novel writing opportunities.

During the PAR process, the youth had myriad opportunities to create texts and use writing in ways that were somewhat new or uncommon to them. As the youth took advantage of these opportunities and engaged in these novel writing activities, their ideas about writing shifted. More precisely, the novel writing opportunities allowed the focal youth coresearchers to reassess the value of specific writing activities, recognize additional writing purposes and contexts, and (re)discover writing as both creative and transformative process. These new or expanded understandings of writing seemed to have increased the youth’s writing engagement. Below I illustrate these processes with some examples.

At the beginning of the PAR process, Teresa did not think note-taking was very useful and seldom “tomaba apuntes” (took notes) in and out of class. In the rare cases when she took notes, she said she did not check them or use them afterwards. She was therefore reluctant to take notes in the first program sessions (e.g., Fieldnotes, March 27, 2019; Fieldnotes, April 24, 2019). However, as she took research-related notes (e.g., fieldnotes or analysis notes), she realized that this type of writing could be helpful. Later (in the post-program interview), Teresa argued that taking research-related notes helped her gather and remember “important information” concerning her study. She also reported reviewing and complementing her research notes in later stages of research process (namely, data analysis). By the end of the PAR process, she affirmed that note-taking was “useful” and that she was taking more notes on her own in and out of the program. Thus, as Teresa’s case shows, PAR gave the youth new reasons and opportunities to engage in certain writing activities. The youth’s participation in those activities often led them to view the given activities from a different perspective and, in turn, increase their subsequent engagement in those activities.

Like Teresa, Pamela expanded her conception of writing as she had the chance to utilize writing for new purposes in the PAR process. Initially, Pamela reported viewing writing as something to use only at school or for school purposes. At the beginning of the program, she believed writing was mainly about copying information (usually related to school or church) and communicating it to others. In other words, her initial writing conceptions were predominantly reproductive. However, after having multiple opportunities to engage in emotional/reflective writing during the program sessions, she

began to conceive writing as a means to express feelings or emotions. This shift in her ideas about writing is crystallized in the following quote:

Ahora [después del programa] creo que la escritura no solo la podemos utilizar en la escuela, o por lo que tenemos que hacer las tareas; sino que es como una forma de expresar lo que sentimos. Podemos expresarnos escribiendo.
[Now [after the program] I think that writing can not only be used in school, or when we have to do homework, but it is also like a way of expressing what we feel. We can express ourselves through writing.] (Pamela, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

The above excerpt clearly shows that Pamela changed her view of writing as a school-based activity to a tool to express herself, beyond school. Her end-of-the-program perception seems to align with a transformational conception of writing. Thus, Pamela's conceptions of writing appeared to change from highly reproductive to highly transformational as she had the opportunity to utilize writing for transformational and emotional purposes during the program.

In addition, the PAR process included opportunities to compose “non-traditional,” multimodal texts (e.g., collages, short films, and book boxes), which encouraged youth to widen their writing conceptions. The pre-program interviews and my fieldnotes indicate that the youth thought about writing primarily in terms of “letters” and “written symbols” at the beginning of the PAR process. Towards the end, when they creating their own research-based compositions, I heard them frequently talking about other textual elements (e.g., images, design/layout). This shift indicated that the youth came to see writing as something that transcended print and that they were increasing their awareness of relationships between written language and other modes of communication. Simply put, they had expanded their conceptions of writing.

The ELA teacher, Ms. Arguer, agreed with my observation that the novel writing opportunities offered in the PAR process triggered shifts in how the student coresearchers conceived writing. She stated: “I think it [the program] gave them another opportunity or another avenue to use reading and writing skills to create a different kind of product, like the posters. Maybe, that helped change their perspective a little bit on writing.” (Ms. Arguer, Formal interview #2, June 14, 2019). As Ms. Arguer intimated, creating novel written compositions along the PAR process seemed to have prompted the youth to see and engage in writing in new ways.

Moreover, the PAR-based multimodal composing processes allowed the youth to build on funds of knowledge gained in their home countries so they could better express themselves. For example, Teresa said she drew on her previous poster making experiences in El Salvador and on what she learned from her sister about graphic design. Likewise, Nany shared that she built on what she learned in her home country (Honduras) about digital poster design to help her research team create a poster online and convey their findings effectively. The use of the various modes of communication seemed to have increased the coresearchers’ engagement in writing and supported their belief that writing could be a creative, transformational enterprise. In the next section, I further discuss this point and illustrate how multimodal texts fomented social interaction and interpersonal communication.

Dialogic talk.

While I was conducting participant observations of the PAR activities, I noticed that some interactions between the focal youth coresearchers and other people (e.g., teachers, fellow high school students, and school administrators) involved in the PAR

process had an impact on the youth's ideas about writing. This observation made sense to me in light of Vygotskian SCT, which is based on the premise that individuals develop their thinking and increase their understanding of a subject—in this case, writing—as they interact with others (Moll, 2014; Rogoff, 1998; Wertsch, 1991), especially if they are talking and thinking together about that subject (Mercer, 2008; Swain & Watanabe, 2008). Drawing on that premise, I carefully examined other data sources (e.g., my post-program interviews with students and teachers). My analysis indicated that the interactions that impacted the youth's writing conceptions typically involved talking. Those interactions/conversations occurred during, interviews, research presentations, and group discussions.

However, contrary to what I initially expected, not all the interactions/conversations that altered the focal youth coresearchers' writing conceptions were focused on the subject of writing. Many of those “influential talks” revolved around topics other than writing. For instance, the youth's interviews with teachers focused on the topic of teacher happiness; yet their conversation involved writing, as the youth's written interview questionnaire served as a conversation guide. Despite not addressing the topic of writing explicitly, this youth-teacher interaction seemed to have helped the youth better understand the role of writing in data collection (I elaborate on this example later in this section). The common feature among the influential talks was they all involved two-way communication between a youth and another person(s). Due to that fact, I called those conversations “dialogic talks.”

I came up with the term “dialogic talk” inspired by my conceptual framework. I borrowed the notion of “dialogue” from the scholarship on critical pedagogy. More

precisely, I built on Freire's (1970) premise that dialogue is "freedom, equality, and responsibility in discovering and transforming the world of every human being" (p. 61). I considered that the conversations/talks were dialogic because they were "*free*" (in that the speakers were not coerced to talk), "*egalitarian*" (in that the speakers could share ideas as equals), and "*responsive*" (in that the speakers typically attended to each other and built on each other's ideas to co-construct knowledge or understanding). And, following SCT scholars (e.g., Mercer, 2008), I dubbed the conversations "talks" to signal that the dialogue occurred through oral (rather than written) communication and that it involved dynamic, functional uses of language.

In a later revision of the existing literature, I discovered that other authors (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Díez-Palomar & Olivé, 2015; Mercer, 2003; Myhill, Newman, & Watson, 2020) had previously used the term "dialogic talk." Many of these authors borrowed the construct from Alexander (2000, 2008). Drawing on SCT and classroom-based research, Alexander (2008) defined "dialogic talk" as a classroom interaction in which both teachers and students present ideas and make arguments in order to reach agreements and common understandings. Like Alexander (2008), I claim—based on SCT—that in "dialogic talk" people freely exchange ideas to co-construct understanding. Yet my use of the term is broader than Alexander's (2008); I believe that dialogic talk can take place outside of the classroom and unfold not only between teachers and students but also among students. Further, in alignment with the work of Freire (1970) and other critical pedagogues, I uphold that dialogic talk should not just aim to instruct "learners" but rather to bring about individual and social transformation. In what follows,

I illustrate the dialogic talks that occurred in group sessions, interviews, and research presentations along the PAR process.

Dialogic talk in group sessions.

Some of the dialogic talks that unfolded in the group sessions of the afterschool program seemed to affect how the youth coresearchers conceived writing. For example, in the ninth session of the program, my youth coresearchers and I talked about the meaning of writing, and, through our conversation, we refined our ideas of writing and composing:

1. Angélica: So, what's writing?
2. Ashley: When your hand is putting something on a paper.
3. Lucifer: It's putting your imagination and inspiration, all, in letters and words.
4. Andrés: *¡Qué filosófica!*
[That's philosophic!]
5. Angélica: Ok
6. Teresa: [to Lucifer] I like your definition.
7. Angélica: And what's composing?
8. Ashley: When you put together, something together.
9. Angélica: Yeah?
10. Lucifer: When you are your own author
11. Angélica: When you are your own author... So, when you create something, right?
12. Teresa: Yeah
13. Angélica: So, what's the difference between writing and composing, in your opinion?
14. Lucifer: When you write, you write something that doesn't have to be yours to write it...
15. Teresa: Uhu
16. Lucifer: but composing...
17. Teresa: | it's yours
18. Lucifer: | it's yours (Fieldnotes, May 8, 2019).

The above excerpt exemplifies the main characteristics of dialogic talk and shows that this type of talk can allow people to reach new, deep understandings of writing. To be more precise, I characterized this exchange as dialogic talk because we freely shared

ideas about writing/composing and discovered others' perspectives on writing, which eventually led the youth to co-construct a more complex understanding of writing/composing. At the beginning of the talk (line 2 of the excerpt), Ashley (a nonfocal, US-born Latina coresearcher) provided a basic definition of writing—namely, writing is simply a manual action. But, in the next conversational turn, Lucifer (a nonfocal, Salvadorian coresearcher) complexified that definition by adding that writing requires creativity (i.e., imagination and inspiration)—not just manual labor. Then, Ashley, Lucifer, Teresa, and I crafted a definition of composing in which we juxtaposed the ideas of being an author and creating something by bringing various pieces together. At the end of the conversation, Teresa and Lucifer drew a clear distinction between writing and composing: whereas writing could be just replicating what someone else had said or done, composing entailed creating something new, based on what they knew or thought. Later, in subsequent program sessions, many youth coresearchers (including three of the four focal youth) restated or alluded to those definitions of writing and composing. Thus, data suggest dialogic talk about writing/composing in Session 9 influenced how some youth coresearchers conceived writing.

The youth's writing conceptions were also shaped by the conversations they had with me. The focal teens said I influenced how they conceived of and engaged in writing, especially when I talked with them about writing in the program sessions. For instance, Nany claimed that the program had impacted her writing because I told her how to write things “correctly”:

Angélica: *¿crees que el programa tuvo un impacto en la forma en la que escribes en inglés o en español?*

[Do you think the program had an impact on the way you write in English or Spanish?]

- Nany: *Sí, la verdad, sí ayudó mucho, Miss.*
[Yes, actually, it did help a lot, Miss.]
- Angélica: *¿Por qué?*
[Why?]
- Nany: *Porque había muchas cosas que quizás no las sabíamos, y [usted] siempre nos corrigió, o sea, nos enseñó la manera de cómo escribirlas correctamente.* [Because there were many things that we may not have known, and [you] always corrected us, that is, taught us how to write them correctly.] (Nany, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Along similar lines, Andrés stated that my corrections and explanations helped him improved his writing:

- Andrés: *...He aprendido [en el programa] ciertas maneras de escribir cosas que tengan un poco más de sentido y a mejorar un poco mi gramática.* [I have learned [in the program] certain ways of writing things that make a little more sense and I have improved my grammar a bit.]
- Angélica: *¿Y cómo aprendiste eso?*
[And how did you learn that?]
- Andrés: *Porque cuando estábamos escribiendo el póster, y cuando estábamos haciendo el collage Angélica nos corrigió y nos enseñó. Por ejemplo, nunca me habían explicado cómo se usan los apóstrofes [en inglés] y Angélica nos dijo cuando estábamos escribiendo lo de los alumnos.* [Because when we were writing the poster, and when we were doing the collage, Angelica corrected us and taught us. For example, they had never explained to me how apostrophes are used [in English] and Angelica told us [about it] when we were writing about students.] (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Nany's and Andrés comments suggest that the youth's writing benefitted from talking and learning about aspects of the written language related to the writing tasks at hand. Although some scholars (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007) might call these conversations "explicit writing instruction", I would call them "writing-focused dialogic talks" because they were not monologic. Rather, the talks involved an actual exchange and co-construction of ideas; both the youth and I attended to each other and built on each other's ideas to further develop our understanding of writing. As the youth participated in the dialogic talks, they learned about the mechanics of writing and

language, which helped them increase their confidence in their writing skills and facilitated their participation in writing activities. Thus, writing-focused dialogic talks can have a positive influence on youth's ideas of and engagement in writing.

Additionally, the focal youth intimated that, because I often talked with them about the importance of "writing things down," I encouraged them to write, and through their engagement in writing activities, they changed their ideas about writing. Pamela's ideas and experiences with emotional writing (analyzed earlier) are a great example of this pattern. Thus, the focal youth's conversations with me expanded their writing conceptions and increased their writing engagement.

Dialogic talk in interviews.

A set of dialogic talks that influenced the youth coresearchers' writing conceptions occurred while they conducted interviews for their research projects. Although—as stated earlier—none of the youth-led interviews addressed writing directly, some conversations between youth and others (namely, teachers and fellow students) made them reconsider their understanding and use of writing. For instance, after conducting a series of interviews (which I considered dialogic talks because they were free, egalitarian, and responsive), Teresa realized she "could not remember all [that the interviewees said]" and that taking written notes during the interviews helped her later recall key information. Because of Teresa's participation in these dialogic talks and her increased use of writing during the talks, she recognized writing could be a powerful cognitive tool. This realization, in turn, prompted her to write down more notes about daily life and events, as discussed earlier.

Pamela shared that conducting interviews helped her better understand other people's perspectives and made her want to create a multimodal composition through which she could share her research findings. She believed her research-based, multimodal composition (a short film about a young person who is forced to move another country) could help people understand each other and feel "less lonely" (Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019). Thus, as Pamela's and Teresa's comments suggest, the dialogic talks that took place during the youth-led interviews encouraged the youth to engage in writing and conceive it in new ways.

Dialogic talk in research presentations.

Other important dialogic talks that shaped how the youth conceived writing unfolded as they presented their research findings outside the program. For example, Andrés claimed that he and his team had to share his findings with multiple audiences (e.g., students, teachers, and administrators) if his study was to provoke the changes that the team desired.

Andrés: *Si no hubiéramos escrito ni presentado nada [de nuestra investigación], no tendría mucho sentido haber hecho la investigación. Si la información solo nos la íbamos a quedar nosotros, eso [nuestra investigación] no serviría de nada. No, no era bueno que solo nosotros [los miembros del grupo], nos quedáramos solos con esa gran información. Teníamos que compartir la información con otras personas [fuera del grupo de investigación].*

[If we had not written or submitted anything [of our research], it would not make much sense to have done the research. If we were only going to keep the information, that [our investigation] would be of no use. No, it was not good that only we [the group members] had kept that great information. We had to share the information with other people [outside the research group].]

Angélica: *¿Pero por qué es tan importante compartir la información? En muchas clases ustedes hacen trabajos que se quedan como en el salón de clase; no comparten la información afuera del salón.*

[But why is sharing the information so important? In many classes you do projects that stay within the classroom; you don't share the information outside the classroom.]

Andrés: *Esta información [de nuestro proyecto de investigación] era diferente porque era sobre la motivación de los maestros y teníamos que hacerles entender a los alumnos cuáles son sus efectos de sus acciones. También dejarles saber a los maestros que la ayuda entre ellos también es importante. Y cuando lo presentamos en la cafetería, ahí estaba [el director de la escuela y el subdirector] que son como la administración. Ahí les dejamos saber a ellos la importancia que también tiene su apoyo hacia los maestros.*

[This information [from our research project] was different because it was about teachers' motivation and we had to make the students understand the effects of their actions. We also had to let teachers know that support among them is also important. And when we presented it at the cafeteria, [the school principal and the assistant principal], who are like the administration, were there. There we let them know the importance of their support towards teachers.] (Andrés, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

Andrés intimated that, by sharing his findings through oral and written communication, he could not only increase people's understanding of teacher happiness but also encourage them to act in ways that supported teacher's satisfaction. Andrés substantiated these beliefs with attendees' positive feedback and comments, such as "your presentation had made us [the attendees] think more about what we could do to help teachers be happier" (Fieldnotes, April 26, 2019). Thus, through the dialogic talks that occurred during and after the presentations, both in and out of his school, Andrés recognized both writing and speech as tools to enact his agency and promote his intended social change: improve teachers' work conditions and well-being. In other words, the opportunities that Andrés had to dialogue with different audiences increased his awareness of the power of writing to accomplish his own goals and transform his social context; this awareness is a fundamental component of critical literacy and of a transformational writing conception.

Like Andrés, Teresa emphasized the importance of multimodal texts and oral presentations to reach multiple audiences and augment attendees' interest in her study and its implications:

Angélica: *¿Qué te hubiera parecido si en vez de haber hecho el póster o el collage hubiéramos hecho solamente un ensayo o un escrito tradicional?*

[What would you have thought if instead of having done the poster or the collage we had only done an essay or a traditional writing?]

Teresa: *Creo que no muchas personas lo hubieran leído [el ensayo o escrito tradicional], no aquí en la escuela. Y creo que por el hecho de que las hayamos ido a presentar [el póster o el collage], ellos nos pusieron atención. Y si tenían preguntas, ellos podían hacerlas. En cambio, si hacíamos un ensayo, un escrito o algo, ellos no iban a tener la oportunidad de hacer preguntas de alguna duda o algo.*

[I think not many people would have read it [the essay or the traditional writing piece], not here at school. And I think that because of the fact that we went to present them [the poster and the collage], they paid attention to us. And if they had questions, they could ask them.

However, if we had done an essay, a writing or something, they were not going to have the opportunity to ask questions of any doubt or something.] (Teresa, Formal interview #2, June 13, 2019).

The quote above suggests Teresa knew that distinct types of writing and modes of communication had different affordances and effects on her audience. Interestingly, she and other focal youth perceived nontraditional writing/compositions as more attractive and interactive than traditional compositions. They indicated that nontraditional compositions allowed them to connect diverse audiences (namely, educators and students) and to start conversations with them. By contrast, they appeared to assume that these audiences would not be interested in traditional texts, which might have precluded interactions. Like Andrés, Teresa and the other focal youth seemed to have buttressed these beliefs as they presented their multimodal texts and observed attendees' reactions. Thus, as I further argue in the next chapter, by creating and sharing multimodal texts with different audiences, the focal youth could promote interactions with people outside the

research program and increase their understanding of how particular communication modes could help them achieve specific rhetorical purposes and bring about social changes in their communities.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented three major study findings—which correspond to my three main research questions and are derived from my deductive and inductive analyses of the data. First, I found the focal youth perceived PAR as an opportunity for conscientization and for challenging dialogue. Second, I discovered the focal youth’s writing conceptions were predominantly reproductive before participating in the program. Yet, during and after the PAR program, they further developed their transformational conception of writing. Finally, I found that the main aspects of the PAR process that influenced the youth’s writing conceptions were its youth-centeredness, novel writing opportunities, and dialogic talks. In the next chapter, I explicate how my study findings contribute to education theory, research, and practice as well as delineate future research directions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation addressed the important, yet under-investigated relation between NLHSs' involvement in PAR and their writing conceptions. My study resulted in three main, significant findings. First, the focal youth perceived PAR as an opportunity for conscientization and for challenging dialogue. Second, the focal youth's writing conceptions were predominantly reproductive before participating in the program, but they developed a transformational conception of writing through the PAR program. Lastly, the main aspects of the PAR process that influenced the youth's writing conceptions were its youth-centeredness, novel writing opportunities, and dialogic talks. In this chapter, I revisit and expand on my findings to explain the contributions of this study to theory, research, and practice.

Theoretical Considerations and Contributions

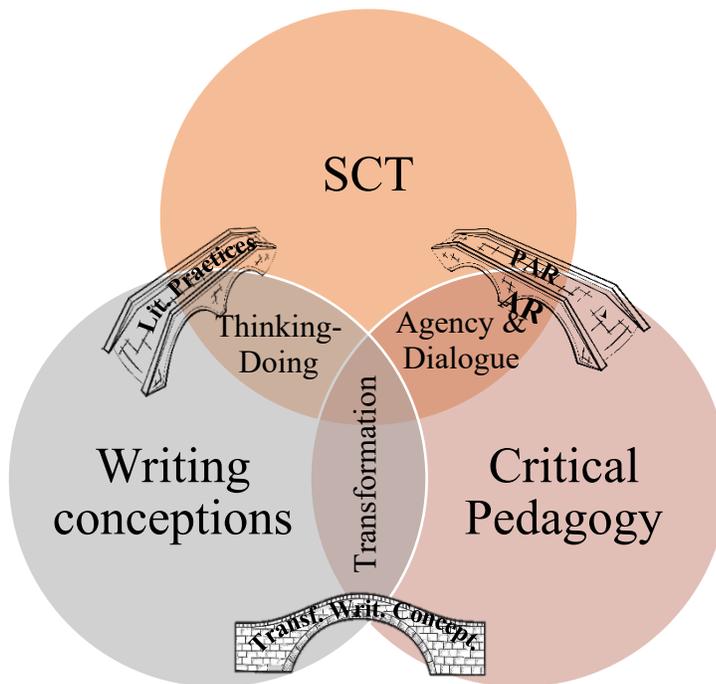
The theoretical perspectives that undergirded this study, SCT and critical pedagogy, helped me better understand my study phenomena and allowed me to identify key study findings. SCT helped me identify aspects of PAR that influenced my coresearchers' writing conceptions. Because SCT scholars (e.g., Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch 1991) have argued that doing and thinking develop in tandem in particular sociocultural contexts, I focused part of my data analysis on how the youth coresearchers engaged in both writing and research as well as on the link between their actions and their ideas about writing in the context of the PAR program. This analysis suggests that the youth changed how they conceived writing and research, as they were researching and writing in new ways—different from how they did in their regular classes. In addition, SCT-based scholarship helped me recognize and name specific aspects of the individual's

assets as it offered me several constructs (e.g., “funds of knowledge” and “literacy practices”) that ended up facilitating my understanding.

Critical pedagogy allowed me to recognize other important aspects of the PAR process. The scholarship on critical pedagogy and critical literacy (e.g., Darder et al., 2017; McLaren, 2015; Morrell, 2008a) alerted me to the importance of dialogue, agency, and conscientization in the PAR process. It helped me notice how the youth’s conceptions of writing and research shifted as they had opportunities to use those two tools (writing and research) to engage in genuine dialogue with others, transform their social worlds, and increase their understandings of themselves and others. Critical pedagogy offered me a unique perspective on research and writing.

My dissertation contributed to education scholarship by connecting three bodies of literature that (until now) have developed separately: critical pedagogy, SCT, and writing conceptions. I explain how I linked those three theoretical strands in what follows. For a visual representation of the connections that I drew between the literature on SCT, critical pedagogy, and conceptions of writing, see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Connections among SCT, Critical Pedagogy, and Conceptions of Writing.



I contend that SCT and critical pedagogy are complementary theoretical lenses; while SCT explains how learning occurs, critical pedagogy provides guidance on why and how we should teach. These two theoretical perspectives also share similar tenets, such as viewing teaching-learning as a dialogic process and considering learners as agents who can (re)create knowledge and transform their social contexts. I proposed that, because PAR is consonant with tenets of both SCT and critical pedagogy, it could serve as a bridge between those two perspectives. I demonstrated the two perspectives could be brought together to design and analyze PAR processes. For instance, by drawing on both critical pedagogy and SCT, I was able to demonstrate that PAR influenced the youth's ideas about writing as it allowed the youth to use their agency, participate in novel writing opportunities, and engage in dialogue talks. Indeed, I devised the construct of "dialogic talk" by building on critical pedagogues' definition of dialogue and on the SCT scholars' claim that talk/dialogue can propel people's understanding of a subject (in this

case, writing). The combination of the two lenses allowed me to better understand why and how particular conversations prompted the youth to develop certain conceptions of writing and research. I, therefore, believe that the use of these two theoretical lenses (combined) can enhance scholars' understanding of teaching and learning.

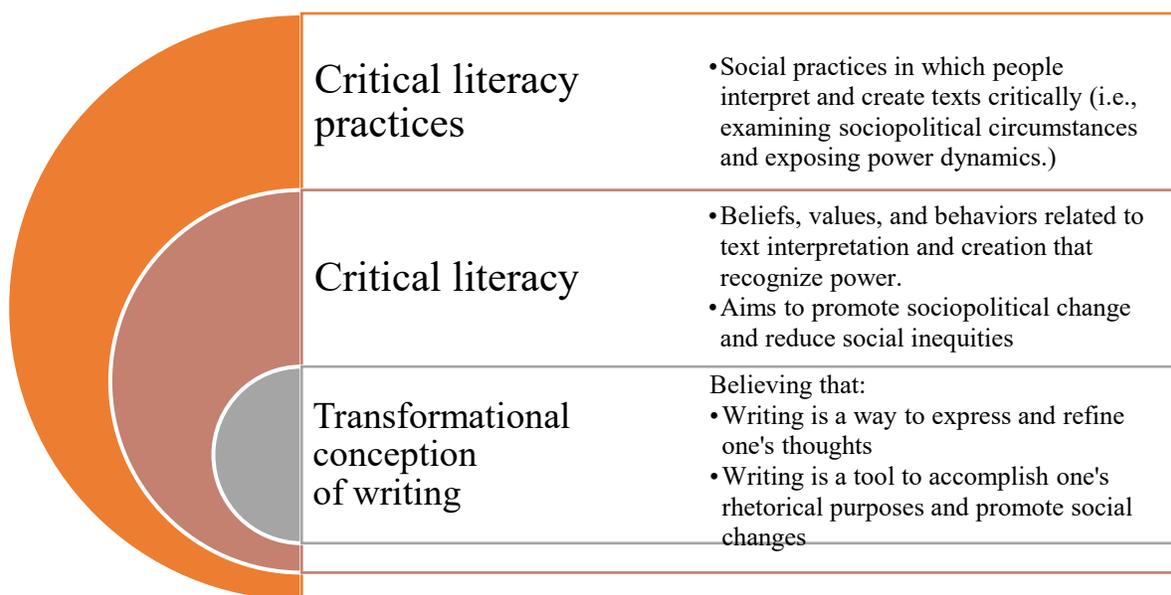
For example, drawing on both critical pedagogy and SCT, I would argue that conscientization is a continuous, developmental process that should begin with and be embedded in people's everyday realities. Critical pedagogues (e.g., Freire, 1970) and PAR advocates (e.g., Park, 1993) propose that conscientization is not a finite product but rather an incessant process of analyzing and transforming one's reality. Hence, I believe that the participating youth coresearchers will continue examining and attempting to change their worlds. Each youth has the potential to build on what they learned during the PAR process in order to engage in social actions that improve not only their surrounding circumstances but also large social structures and ideologies. However, because SCT scholars (e.g., Lave, 1988; Rogoff & Lave, 1999) have demonstrated that people learn how to frame and solve their problems by using the material and social resources that are available to them, I would contend that the youth would learn best how to address large social problems by first deepening their awareness of their immediate social contexts (e.g., their school community) and attempting to purposefully transform it. With time and practice, I would expect the youth to move from thinking only in terms of their everyday, concrete experiences to viewing their actions as part of larger, more abstract structures. For some youth, this PAR experience could be the beginning of a life-long process of conscientization and transformation.

Additionally, my dissertation built a bridge between the literature on writing conceptions and critical pedagogy. Drawing on critical pedagogy and based on my findings, I contend that critical literacy encompasses transformational conceptions of writing (see Figure 4). As explained in Chapter 2, critical literacy is a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors related to text interpretation and creation that aims to promote sociopolitical changes and reduce social inequities. Critical literacy beliefs reflect a transformational conception of writing, which involves viewing writing as a way to express and refine one's thoughts as well as a tool to accomplish one's rhetorical purposes (Mateos & Solé, 2012; Villalón et al., 2015; White & Bruning, 2005). Rhetorical purposes can include bringing about social changes. For example, Andrés' main rhetorical purpose while creating and sharing posters was to persuade his audience to act in ways that made teachers happy. His goal was to transform school communities so they could increase teacher happiness and prevent teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs. Thus, Andrés seemed to conceive writing as a tool to accomplish his rhetorical purposes and promote social changes in schools. That is, he held a transformational conception of writing that was closely aligned to the beliefs that underlie critical literacy. My findings led me to expand the transformational conception of writing to include a sociopolitical dimension, which is a key element of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2002).

Finally, I contribute to theories of literacy and writing by proposing that the SCT-based construct of "literacy practices" (Street, 1984) could be connected to the notion of "conceptions of writing." More precisely, I argue that people's conceptions of writing were part of their literacy practices and that people's engagement in certain literacy

events (including creating multimodal texts and writing) could shape and be shaped by their writing conceptions. While I have not fully proved these connections with empirical evidence, my findings indicate that a relationship does indeed exist between what Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) call “critical literacy practices” and my conceptualization of transformational conceptions of writing (see Figure 4). That is, my findings suggests that when people explore power and social dynamics through text interpretation and creation (e.g., when the focal youth composed interview protocols to question and dialogue with authority figures at their school), they are likely to believe that writing is a tool to express themselves and promote social change. However, scholars should further explore the relationship between writing conceptions and literacy practices.

Figure 4. Relation between Critical Literacy and Transformational Conception of Writing.



Research Contributions

The study makes several unique and significant contributions to research on PAR and writing. To begin, this study is the first (to the best of my knowledge) that centers on

how NLHSs perceive PAR. Prior studies (e.g., Morrell, 2007) have discussed the research experiences of Latinx or urban youth, in general, from the researcher's perspective; these studies seldom center on the research experiences of specific student subgroups. By contrast, my investigation concentrated on the experiences and perspectives of a particular group of immigrant students: NLHSs. My unique research focus led me to intriguing findings. I found that the focal NLHSs' initial conceptions of research were based on their research experiences in school in both their home countries and the U.S. Their previous research experiences—especially in their home countries—mainly involved looking up information in books or the internet about a teacher-assigned topic. Hence, they tended to view research as a teacher-led, transactional process in which they had to extract specific information from written texts and give it to teachers in exchange for a grade. They expected the PAR process to be like their prior research experiences, that is, they supposed PAR would involve adult-led, research with secondary data. This finding indicates that immigrant students' prior research experiences (in both their home countries and the U.S.) affect their perceptions of research and their participation in PAR processes—which, as far as I know, had not been empirically proven.

Moreover, my investigation demonstrated that youth's research perceptions can shift over time, especially as they participate in a youth-led PAR process. To be more precise, my study revealed that, through the PAR program, the focal NLHSs grasped the transformative power of research. While none of the focal teenagers explicitly said that research could bring about social changes or help people better understand themselves or their realities before participating in the PAR process, all of them reported believing that

they could use research to comprehend and transform their lives or their contexts by the end of the program. This finding suggests that youth's perceptions of research are not static but rather change over time or in relation to new learning experiences. Therefore, we may expect immigrant students to shift their views of research after they migrate to a new country and experience new ways of doing research. However, these findings and presumptions need to be corroborated empirically; researchers must conduct additional studies on immigrant students' research perspectives and experiences.

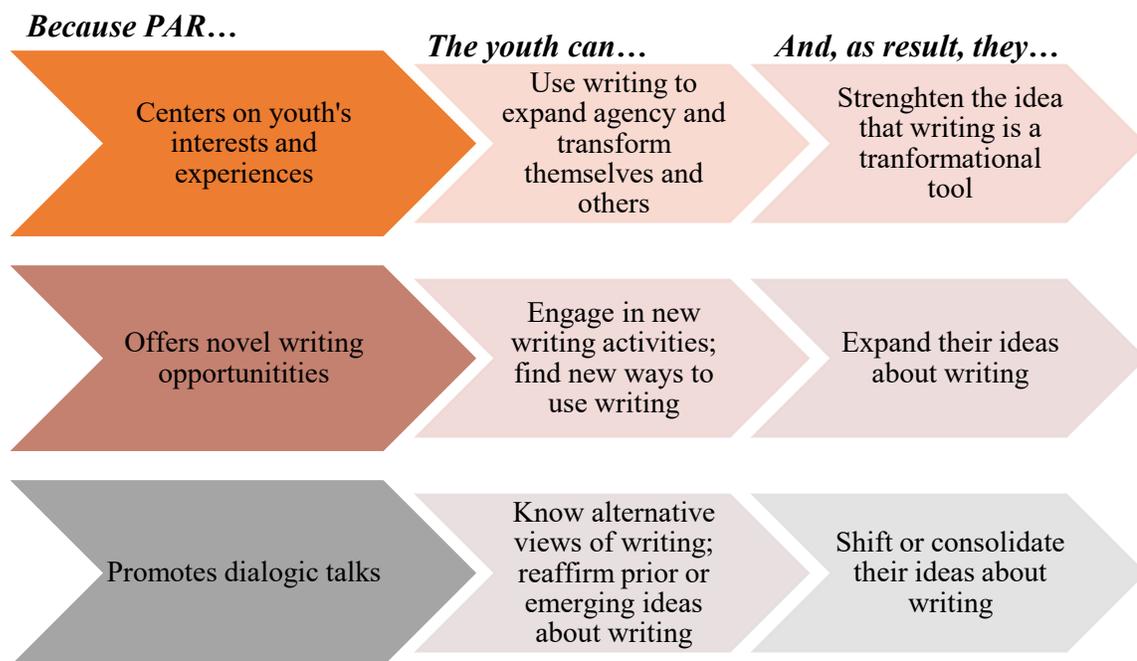
My study also contributed to research on writing conceptions. Most studies on students' writing conceptions have been conducted with college-level students and in European contexts. My dissertation broadens the scope of that body of literature to include Central American, immigrant high schoolers in the US. My study indicates that the students' experiences with writing in their home countries affect how they conceive writing. For instance, three of the focal youth learned at school in their home countries there was a difference between "writing" and "composing." Although they did not mention this difference in the initial interview, over the course of the study, they alluded to and reaffirmed that distinction. In the final interview, they reported believing that whereas writing largely involved replicating what someone else had said or done, composing entailed creating something new, based on what one knows or thinks. I consider the distinction between "writing" and "composing" as a part of the NLHSs' implicit beliefs about writing and conceptualized this distinction using White and Brunings' (2005) and Villalón et al.'s (2015) models of writing conceptions. I deduced that the notion of "writing" was connected to a reproductive writing while the construct of "composition" was linked to transformational writing.

In sum, my study contributes to research on writing conceptions in two ways. First, it shows that immigrant students' learning experiences in their home countries can shape their implicit beliefs about writing, which may become prominent while they are working with writing in their new countries of residence. Second, I uncovered an important distinction between "writing" and "composing" by associating them to reproductive and transformational conceptions of writing, respectively. Because these associations have not been fully explored yet, I urge researchers to conduct additional studies on the writing conceptions of both immigrant and non-immigrant students in the US and other countries.

The last major research contribution of my study was exploring the ways or mechanisms through which PAR shaped NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement. Prior to this study, researchers had not directly investigated how PAR affected NLHSs' writing. Yet, based on how I interpreted previous research findings, I initially believed PAR might influence NLHSs' writing conceptions and engagement as it: (a) built on students' prior experiences and knowledge, (b) offered numerous opportunities to create various types of texts, and (c) promoted positive relations and interactions among students and between teachers and students. I refined this initial premise. Specifically, I found the main aspects of the PAR process that influenced the youth's writing conceptions were its youth-centeredness, novel writing opportunities, and dialogic talks. The mechanisms of influence were more complex than what I initially presumed. Because the mechanisms through which PAR shapes youth coresearchers' writing remain unexplored in the existing literature, following, I will expound on those mechanisms. A

graphic representation of the mechanisms of influence of PAR is available below, in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Mechanisms of Influence of PAR on Writing Conceptions



My findings suggest that, because the PAR process—including its writing activities—revolved around the interests and experiences of the youth coresearchers, it allowed the youth to use writing as a way to express what they (rather than others) thought and felt, to make people aware of issues they believed were important and to change what others thought about and addressed those issues. In other words, because PAR is youth-centered, it encouraged the youth to employ writing as a tool to enact and expand their agency, their capacity to act in regards to others, and to transform their social milieu. These new ways of using writing helped the youth confirm the notion that writing is a tool for social transformation (i.e., a transformational conception of writing).

Additionally, my findings indicate that PAR had an impact on the youth's writing conceptions as it offered them *novel* and *personally relevant* writing opportunities. Like prior studies (e.g., Jocson, 2012; Linares, 2017, 2019), my investigation demonstrated that when youth have opportunities to write and create multimodal compositions, especially about topics that are important to them, they increase their engagement in writing and strengthen their belief that writing relevant to their lives. Yet, my study expanded prior research by showing that PAR can also help youth find new ways to use writing—which, in turn, can prompt them to expand their writing conceptions. For example, I (as the PAR facilitator) encouraged the youth coresearchers to write about what they observed and felt during the course of their research, and they began to experiment with writing on their own, using it as a way to record information they gathered, share their research findings, and process their emotions. As they tried out these uses of writing, they further developed or shifted their ideas about specific writing activities and about writing in general.

Moreover, my research suggests that youth's writing conceptions and engagement may vary by activity. The youth seemed to associate note-taking with a reproductive conception of writing and creating multimodal compositions and personal reflections with a transformational conception of writing. That is, they appeared to believe that, whereas the main purpose of notetaking was to record or transmit preexisting information, the goal of multimodal compositions and personal reflections was to express and refine their thoughts. And, although the youth were more eager to engage in transformational than in reproductive activities, they recognized that each activity was important and strived to participate in all activities.

My study findings indicate that youth's ideas about writing are so complex and dynamic that they cannot be easily classified. For example, some students may approach writing as a means of expression in a classroom activity and then shift to view it as an imitative act in the next task. Hence, it may be problematic to classify their conceptions as either reproductive or transformational. Writing conceptions are not necessarily dichotomous. Likewise, it should not be assumed that a given writing conception is always better than the other one(s); youth may benefit from conceiving and engaging writing in different ways. Sometimes, it may be helpful for the youth to see exemplary pieces of literature (i.e., "mentor texts") and trying to emulate those texts; on other occasions, it may be better if the youth write freely, without the constraints of a canon. I call scholars to continue exploring the nuances of youth's writing conceptions and to examine both the affordances or constraints that these conceptions bring to the youth's writing engagement and performance.

Lastly, my study demonstrated that PAR can shape NLHSs' writing conceptions through dialogic talks among youth and between adults and youth. In prior research (e.g., Flint et al., 2018), scholars broadly argue that positive teacher-student and student-student relations help NLHSs change their ideas about writing. However, these studies often fail to explain how these changes are related to specific features of interpersonal relations and to analyzing relations or interactions outside of the classroom. My research addresses these gaps; its findings suggested that NLHSs' writing conceptions can shift as they talk with both peers and adults inside and outside of the classroom. More specifically, the conversations that impacted NLHSs' writing conceptions had two characteristics in common: they were based on written compositions (e.g., their interview

protocols or multimodal compositions) and involved honest, responsive, oral communication between the teen(s) and others.

I also discovered that those “influential conversations” were based on “genuine dialogue,” as defined by Freire (1970). The interactions were dialogic because they were “free” (in that the speakers were not coerced to talk), “egalitarian” (in that the speakers could share ideas as equals), and “responsive (in that the speakers typically attended to each other and built on each other’s ideas to increase their understanding of a subject). In other words, using SCT parlance, the PAR-based interactions that helped the youth coresearchers develop their writing conceptions were “mediated” by both written and oral language and that allowed the youth to co-construct knowledge about writing. My findings further demonstrated that, as the youth dialogued with others during the PAR process, they could build on what they already knew about writing, comprehend other people’s thoughts about writing, and examine how their written and oral communication affected people’s ideas and actions. Hence, these talks helped the youth confirm that could promote change through writing, and in doing so, the talks allowed them to buttress the idea that writing is a tool for social transformation and strengthening their transformational conception of writing. I expound on the theoretical dimensions of my study in the next section.

Implications for Practice

This study has important implications for educational practice. In this section, I draw on the study findings to suggest ways to improve immigrant students’ well-being and educational opportunities, especially regarding writing. I start by providing some

general recommendations for school administrators and then turn to specific suggestions for educational practitioners.

School administrators should actively seek to establish high-quality programs in which immigrant students can investigate their own contexts. Like other studies (e.g., Cammarota, 2007; de los Ríos et al., 2015; LaDuke, 2010), my dissertation research shows that programs focused on youth-led research allow students to better comprehend and transform themselves and their worlds, which may contribute to immigrant students' positive socioemotional and academic development in their new home countries.

Administrators can partner with university-based researchers and prospective teachers who wish to implement and examine such programs or by supporting school faculty who may be interested in creating similar educational experiences in extracurricular spaces or as part of regular school classes.

Yet educators should recognize the uniqueness of newly arrived, Central American, immigrant youth. Compared to younger immigrants, immigrant teenagers have more life experiences and are more aware of their surrounding circumstances (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). The youth's experiences prior to, during, and after migration generate emotions and knowledge that influence the youth's participation in educational initiatives. For instance, like Suárez-Orozco and colleagues (2002), my youth coresearchers and I noticed that many Central American newcomer immigrant youths suffered from depression –mainly due to migration-related family separation and conflict. Their depressive episodes oftentimes reduced their school engagement and negatively affected their interpersonal relationships. Through my dissertation research and education practice, I found that the most meaningful educational initiatives and opportunities for

newcomer, Central American, immigrant youth are those that address their emotions. And, as my findings suggest, writing is a powerful tool for immigrant youth to process their emotions and traumatic experiences (see also Dutro, 2011; Park & Blumberg, 2002).

Educators must also bear in mind that Central American youths have accumulated vast, albeit sometimes implicit, cultural knowledge(s) –before, during, and after their migration—that inform their perceptions of and engagement in educational activities. For example, in my study, I uncovered that several Central American teens had learned in their home countries to differentiate between “composing” and “writing.” Under my guidance, they reflected and built on that distinction, which allowed them to clarify and improve their approaches to writing and their engagement in writing-related activities. Their ideas and knowledge, in turn, helped me enhance my notion of writing.

Adults educators should, therefore, view Latinx immigrant youth as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) as well as leverage their prior knowledge, experiences, and interests. My study corroborates the SCT tenet that learners can increase their engagement and learning when educational experiences incorporate their funds of knowledge and personal interests (see Gonzalez et al., 2005). Further, my research indicates that immigrant youth benefit emotionally and academically when their knowledge, experiences, and interests are the center, rather than the periphery, of educational enterprises. Therefore, it behooves education practitioners, administrators, and policy makers to work together to design and implement educational initiatives centered on students’ knowledge, experiences, and interests. These initiatives should begin by meeting students where they are, in terms of their learning trajectories, and

leverage their individual and collective capacities in accordance with SCT and critical pedagogy principles.

Education practitioners should provide immigrant students with multiple kinds of opportunities to write and share their own texts to expand their writing conceptions and engagement. Like previous studies (e.g., Jocson, 2012; Linares, 2017, 2019), my research shows that when NLHSs are allowed to compose various types of texts and for different purposes and audiences, they are likely to increase their engagement with writing and change how they view writing. I also found that immigrant youth especially appreciate opportunities to create multimodal texts in which they can express their opinions, reflect on their lived experiences (including, their emotions and traumas), and/or promote social changes. Further, students may view writing as a more valuable enterprise when they have opportunities to talk about their texts and present them to others. Thus, educators who wish to support immigrant youth in expanding their writing conceptions and engagement should encourage them to compose various types of texts and share their texts with others, in and beyond the classroom and school.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although my dissertation research offered a valuable insight into the relation between NLHSs' involvement in PAR and their writing conceptions, the study had limitations. A major limitation of my study was that it only focused on the youth's reported perceptions of research and writing before, during, and immediately after the PAR program. My understanding of how the youth engaged with writing and research was mainly grounded what the youth and two participating teachers told me and what I observed doing during the PAR program sessions and in a handful of subject matter

classes. Due to time and resource constraints, I did not observe the youth's engagement in writing and research in other contexts, such as at home or online. Neither did I conduct an in-depth analysis of the literacy artifacts (e.g., multimodal compositions) that the youth created or used throughout the program. Hence, I was not able to determine the actual influence of the PAR process on the youth's engagement with writing/composing and research across contexts.

Another limitation was not conducting a multimodal, fine-grained analysis of all the interactions that occurred throughout the PAR process. Rather than analyzing all the PAR-based interactions in depth, I performed a broad content analysis of the interactions I witnessed and then chose the interactions that involved the focal youth coresearchers and were closely related to my research topic (e.g., the group discussion in the 9th program session where the youth and I discuss the difference between “composing” and “writing”) for further examination. I could have gained a deeper understanding of NLHSs' conceptions of writing and research if I had conducted a more detailed discursive analysis –e.g., a “sociocultural discourse analysis” (Mercer, 2004)— of all PAR-related conversations inside and outside of the program. I could have also garnered additional, substantial evidence of changes in coresearchers' conceptions if I had video recorded all our PAR-related interactions and done a rigorous analysis of the moment-by-moment interactions –similar to Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, and Green's (2000) interactional analysis— of both verbal and nonverbal communication. However, I lacked time and resources to conduct this type of microgenetic analysis (cf. Parnafes & diSessa, 2013).

My study was also limited in that it did not delve into how youth's social identities influenced their research and writing conceptions. For instance, I did not examine how gender impacted the youth's participation in the PAR processes (including, its writing activities) and the extent to which differences in participation affected their conceptions of writing and research (cf. Villalón et al., 2015). Moreover, I did not explore how the multiple identities of the youth coresearchers intersected (Crenshaw, 1990) to influence their writing and research experiences. Yet, I acknowledge that individual and group-based social impact how one experiences and conceives the world.

The last limitation of my study is that it did not fully address how the PAR process affected members of the school community who did not participate in the program. More specifically, my research did not examine in depth how non-focal students and school-personnel perceived the program and how, if at all, the student-led research projects shaped how they approached research and writing not only during but also after the program. Indeed, I do not yet know the long-term impact of the PAR process on the school community, in general, or among the students, in particular.

To address the study limitations, future research studies should explore: (a) how immigrant youth conceive and engage in research and writing across contexts, (b) how their cross-contextual engagement with writing and research influence and are shaped by their engagement in PAR projects, and (c) how the PAR process impacts the youth's research and writing in the long-term. Perhaps, for the latter set of studies, it may be useful to incorporate Kibler's (2019) *longitudinal interactional histories approach*, which allows researchers to examine immigrant students' learning trajectories over time, from a sociocultural perspective. I would also recommend that researchers utilize microgenetic

methods (e.g., “interactional ethnography,” Castanheira et al., 2000) and discourse analysis to trace how students change their conceptions in moment-by-moment interactions inside and outside of the PAR process.

Overall, this dissertation has taught me that doing PAR helps. PAR helped my coresearchers and I to explore the world around us; a world that for us, a group of immigrants, is sometimes familiar and sometimes foreign. PAR helped us reflect on who we are (or could be) in that world. PAR encouraged us to be transformers, agents who can change the world—at least a little. PAR allowed us to use both research and writing as tools for personal and social exploration and transformation. PAR made us believe that research and writing do not have to be for and by others; they can be ours. I hope that this dissertation inspires others to research and write about issues that matter to them and to dare to change the world around them through research and writing.

Appendices

Appendix A. Participatory Action Research Program¹²

Angélica Montoya-Ávila

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Program Overview & Goals

This afterschool program will seek to offer high schoolers with opportunities to use both writing and research as tools for critical reflection. The program will introduce the youths to qualitative research methods and to various theoretical perspectives that can shed light on school-level issues or problems. The program will also provide the participating youths with numerous opportunities to engage in both research and writing processes in order to better understand and transform themselves, their communities, and their worlds.

Program Requirements & General Expectations

As a member of the research team, you will be expected to:

- participate in *all* the phases of this research project (described below);
- attend *all* scheduled program sessions;
- be open to different perspectives;
- engage in personal and collective reflection throughout the research phases;
- respect members of the research team;
- read and critically analyze manuscripts concerning educational research, social theories, and/or language before, during, and after each session;
- write about yourself, the research team, the research process, and study findings;
- be accountable for your own work and hold other team members accountable;
- strictly **follow ethical principles and guidelines** for the protection of human subjects of research included in the Belmont Report—namely, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice;
- keep all study data confidential and anonymous. Don't discuss research processes and finding with anybody outside the program, unless all research team members had decided to do so;
- maintain an open and timely communication with all the members of the research team throughout the duration of the research project, which mainly entails:
 - Check your email and your phone messages daily.
 - Respond to team members' research-related messages within 24-48 hours span.

¹² For this appendix, I drew heavily on Covarrubias (2017), Institute for Community Research (2014); and Salinas (2018). The program is tentative and may be susceptible to changes.

- Voice any concerns, questions, or issues throughout the research process whenever they arise. Don't wait for problems to escalate!

Program Outline & Detailed Expectations

Session 1: Team building and social/personal understanding

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will be able to recognize your most salient identities, better understand each other's roles in the study, and define what inequity in education means.
- By the end of this session, the research team will create ground rules to facilitate our collaborative work.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- Who are you? How do you change when interacting with different people or in different situations?
- What do you want to accomplish through the program?

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Complete and submit demographic survey.
- Participate in interview with Angelica.

In today's session, you will:

- Introduce yourself and get to know other team members.
- Review program goals, research team expectations, and program outline.
- Develop "ground rules" for the research team and the program sessions.
- Reflect on our identities by "mapping our educational journeys" (Brown, 2010).
- Start considering (in)equity in education by watching and discussing two YouTube videos:
 - Pedro Noguera's Talk: Are we failing our students?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSehZPz2NoY> (until 3:55)
 - The Unequal Opportunity Race
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX_Vzl-r8NY
- Discuss guidelines for research journals and reflections.

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Write a short reflection on your first impression of the program and the research team on your research journal (research journal prompt# 1).

Session 2: Social research and ethics

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will be able to define what social research is and identify the main ethical principles and guidelines in social research.
- By the end of this session, the research team will better understand why we are a research team.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- Why is it important to conduct social research?
- How will you ensure your research is ethical?

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Sign up for and begin CITI training
- Read Creswell (2015a) and fragments from Freire (1970/2018; 1988)

In today's session, you will:

- Share with the team: What logo or motto should identify our research team? Why?
- Based on this week's readings, discuss the following questions:
 - What is social research? What is the purpose of social research?
 - What worldviews inform social research?
 - Why is ethics important in social research?
- Discuss ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research included in the Belmont Report by completing the initial modules in CITI training and watching the YouTube video The Belmont Report (Part One: Basic Ethical Principles)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86zWBjDaXPk>

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Write a short reflection on your previous experiences doing research on your research journal (research journal prompt# 2).

Session 3: Participatory Action Research

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will be able to distinguish participatory action research from other social research methodologies.
- By the end of this session, the research team will strengthen its identity and cohesion.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- How is PAR different or similar to other types of research?
- Why should (not) we conduct PAR?

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Continue working on CITI training
- Read Rodriguez & Brown (2009) and Romero et al. (2008)

In today's session, you will:

- Based on this week's readings, discuss the following questions:
 - What is PAR?
 - What are the goals of PAR process and product?
 - What are key components of PAR?
- In small groups, compare and contrast PAR with other types of research in terms of purpose, expertise, audience and methods (cf. YPAR, 2014, p. 65).
- Brainstorm potential topics/questions for your research project.

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Submit CITI certificate.
- Write a short reflection on your research journal.

Session 4: Research design (foundations)

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will be able to identify a relevant issue and a researchable question.
- By the end of this session, the research team will several research sub-teams (or *special interest groups*), centered on particular issues/interests.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- What problem or issue do you want to research? Why is this issue/problem relevant to your life and others'?
- What information do you need to understand and address the problem or issue?
- How to (re)frame our research questions and our project? (e.g., Córdova, 2004)

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Read Córdova (2004, especially pp. 36-43), Creswell (2015b), and Maxwell (1996)

In today's session, you will:

- Share with the team: What is your research topic/problem? Why is that topic/problem important? How will you study it? What's your research plan?
- Review readings with “what? so what? now what?” questions
 - WHAT?
 - What did you learn from the readings about research design?
 - What kinds of research designs are there? In what ways are those designs similar or different?
 - SO, WHAT?
 - So... what type of designs seem suitable for the topic/problem you have in mind?
 - What tradeoffs or advantages would you have by selecting this design and not others?
 - NOW WHAT?
 - Based on what you read, what should be your next steps?
- Explore various digital sources of information and online research databases.

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Prepare for the Research Stations Activity.
- Write a short reflection on your research journal.

Session 5: Data collection methods

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will be able to describe the benefits and drawbacks of four methods of research that can be used to gather information.
- By the end of this session, the research team will begin distinguishing between several data collection methods and explain when certain method is more useful.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- What research methods and information can you use to examine the problem/issue?
- Why and how will you use those methods and information?

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Read Merriam's (1998) or Merriam & Tisdell's (2015) chapter on interviewing.
- Read Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995)

In today's session, you will:

- Engage in a Research Stations activity—in which you rotate around four “Research Stations” (mapping, visual documentation, survey, and interviewing) and learn about the benefits and drawbacks of the four data collection methods.
- Complete the “Methods Comparison Chart” (cf. YPAR, 2014, p. 121).
- Conduct observations and write fieldnotes
- Interview one another
- Compare gathered data

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Write a short reflection on your research journal.

Session 6: Data analysis, findings, and research reports

Objectives:

- By the end of this session, you will have stronger qualitative data coding skills.
- By the end of this session, the research team will decide when and why certain approaches to data analysis and dissemination are more appropriate.

Key questions to ponder before and after the session:

- What did you find out?
- How or with whom do you want to share your study findings?

Session procedures:

Before this session, you need to:

- Read Merriam & Tisdell's (2015) chapter on data analysis.

In today's session, you will:

- Share with the team: What is something good happening in life right now? What is something you are struggling with? How is engaging in the research team impacting your life right now?
- Learn about data processing and analysis—that is, looking for patterns, oddities, and key points.
- Find patterns and themes in the data you collected.
- Identify data that illustrate your points and findings as well as (counter)evidence.

Two days after this session, you need to:

- Submit analytic memo.
- Write a short reflection on your research journal.



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Appendix B. Consent to Participate—Youth coresearchers

Project Title	Viewing Immigrant Teenagers' Schooling Experiences Through Participatory Action Research
Purpose of the Study	This is a research project being conducted by doctoral student Angélica Montoya-Ávila, under the supervision of Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán, at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of this research project is to document how students perceive the International High School at Langley Park school and their learning experiences at the school. I (Angélica) am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a student at that school, you have lived in the US for 4 years or less, and you said you would be interested in participating in this research study.
Procedures	<p>If you agree to participate in the study, I will ask you to: (a) complete a demographic survey (which will take 20 mins, approx.), (b) participate in 3 interviews recorded in audio and/or video, and (c) attend the 14 program sessions—one 3-hour session per week during afterschool hours—, (d) let me observe you during the program sessions and on 20 additional occasions/dates, and (e) do up to 4 hours of additional independent work/study each week. The interviews will focus on your opinions on the school and your learning experiences at the school. For example, I will ask you: “What do you like the best about the school?” I will audio/ video record the interviews (if you allow me to do so.) Each interview will last 30 minutes (approx.) and will take place at Casa de Maryland or at the school. I will conduct the interviews in Spanish or English, depending on what you prefer. The observations will focus on your interactions with other study participants and on what you regularly do at school. If you let me do so, I will document what I observe by writing notes and by audio/video recording interactions among study participants at the school. Each observation will last 3 hours (approx.) You can choose when and where you will be observed.</p> <p>To ensure confidentiality, all participants (including you) will be assigned pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the data (all identifying information will be removed). I will save the data on my password protected computer and/or kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. The data will be viewed in their entirety only by me and my faculty advisors.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There might be some risks from participating in this research. It is possible that participants may feel uncomfortable or anxious discussing issues regarding their educational experiences or personal background. To mitigate those risks, you may decline to answer any questions, stop the observation/interview, or quit the study (depending on what you wish.)
Potential Benefits	You may receive some direct benefits from participating in this research. You could learn education research and writing. Moreover, this study will provide an opportunity for educators to better understand how immigrant students perceive the school and its programs in order to improve the educational opportunities for immigrant teenagers in- and out of Maryland. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through increased understanding of how to support youths' learning.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by assigning you a pseudonym and deleting your real name(s) from all data. Using those pseudonyms, I will save all data (field notes, audio/video files, survey responses, writing samples) in my password protected computer and any hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my locked home office. All recordings will be kept confidential; only my faculty advisors and me will view the data in their entirety. Some selected recorded clips may be used at professional

	<p>conferences or educational events (any identifying information will be removed.)</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, I will protect your identity to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park, or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if I am required to do so by law.</p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.</p> <p>If you have questions, concerns, or complaints or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigators:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Angélica Montoya-Ávila 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 Cell phone: (667)228-4401; Email: montoyaa@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or, Angélica's faculty advisor: Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Office phone: (301)405-4432; email: memb@umd.edu</p>
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742 Telephone: 301-405-0678; E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate in this research study, please write your name and sign below.</p>
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT
	DATE
	Do you allow us to be audio record you? Yes ___ No ___
	Do you allow us to be video record you? Yes ___ No ___

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Appendix C. Consentimiento de jóvenes coinvestigadores

Título del proyecto	Viendo las experiencias escolares de los adolescentes inmigrantes a través de la investigación de acción participativa
Propósito del estudio	Éste es un proyecto de investigación llevado a cabo por la estudiante de doctorado Angélica Montoya-Ávila de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Melinda Martin-Beltrán. El propósito de esta investigación es documentar cómo los estudiantes perciben la International High School at Langley Park y sus experiencias de aprendizaje en la escuela. Yo (Angélica) estoy invitándote a participar en esta investigación porque tú estudias esa escuela, has vivido en los EE. UU. durante 4 años (o menos) y dijiste que estabas interesado(a) en trabajar en ser parte de esta investigación.
Procedimientos	<p>Si aceptas participar en el estudio, tendrás que (a) completar una encuesta demográfica (tardará 20 mins, aprox.), (b) participar en 3 entrevistas grabadas en audio y/o video, (c) asistir a las 14 sesiones del programa (una sesión de 3 horas por semana en horas extraescolares), (d) hacer 4 horas (max.) adicionales de trabajo/estudio independiente cada semana y (e) dejarme observarte durante las sesiones del programa y en otras 20 ocasiones/fechas (las que tú elijas.). Las entrevistas se centrarán en tus opiniones sobre la escuela y tus experiencias de aprendizaje. Por ejemplo, te preguntaré: “¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de la escuela?”. Grabaré las entrevistas en audio y video (si tú me lo permites). Cada entrevista durará 30 minutos (aprox.) y se llevará a cabo en Casa de Maryland o en la escuela. Haré las entrevistas en español o inglés, según el idioma que prefieras. Las observaciones se centrarán en tus interacciones con otros participantes del estudio y en lo que haces regularmente en la escuela. Si me lo permites, documentaré lo que observo mediante notas de campo y grabaciones de audio/video entre los participantes del estudio en la escuela. Cada observación durará 3 horas (aprox.). Tú puedes elegir cuándo y dónde serás observado.</p> <p>Para garantizar la confidencialidad, le asignaré un seudónimo a cada participante (incluyéndote a ti) y utilizaré esos sobrenombres en todos los datos (eliminaré toda la información que te identifique). Guardaré los datos en mi computadora, protegida con contraseña, y/o en mi oficina, en un archivador cerrado con candado. Solo mis maestros consejeros de la universidad y yo veremos todos los datos.</p>
Posibles riesgos e inconvenientes	Puede haber algunos riesgos por participar en esta investigación. Es posible que tú te sientas incómodo(a) o ansioso(a) al discutir temas relacionados con tus experiencias personales y educativas. Para mitigar esos riesgos, puedes negarte a responder cualquier pregunta, detener la observación/ entrevista o salirte del estudio (dependiendo de lo que desees).
Posibles beneficios	Puedes recibir algunos beneficios directos al participar en esta investigación. Podrías aprender sobre investigación educativa y escritura. Además, este estudio brindará una oportunidad para que los educadores puedan comprender mejor cómo los estudiantes inmigrantes perciben la escuela y sus programas para mejorar las oportunidades educativas para adolescentes inmigrantes dentro y fuera de Maryland. Yo espero que, en el futuro, otras personas puedan beneficiarse de este estudio a través de una mayor comprensión de cómo apoyar el aprendizaje de los jóvenes.
Confidencialidad	Cualquier posible pérdida de confidencialidad se minimizará al asignarte un seudónimo y al eliminar tu(s) nombre(s) reales de todos los datos. Los archivos digitales se etiquetarán con los seudónimos para proteger la confidencialidad de los participantes. Para proteger la confidencialidad de los participantes, etiquetaré los archivos digitales con los seudónimos. Todas las grabaciones se mantendrán confidenciales. Solo yo y los maestros universitarios

	<p>que guían la investigación podrán ver todas las grabaciones. Algunos clips grabados seleccionados se pueden usar en conferencias profesionales o eventos educativos (se eliminará cualquier información de identificación).</p> <p>Si escribo un manuscrito sobre este proyecto de investigación, protegeré tu identidad en la mayor medida posible. Sin embargo, tu información puede compartirse con representantes de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, o las autoridades gubernamentales si tú o alguien más está en peligro o si la ley me exige hacerlo. Las posibles excepciones a la confidencialidad incluyen casos de sospecha de abuso o maltrato infantil. La ley nos exige informar sospechas de abuso o maltrato infantil a las autoridades correspondientes.</p>
Derecho de desistimiento y preguntas	<p>Tu participación en esta investigación es totalmente voluntaria. Puedes decidir no participar por completo. Si decides participar en la investigación, puedes dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Si decides no participar en este estudio o dejas de participar en algún momento, no recibirás ninguna penalización. No te subirán ni te bajarán las calificaciones por participar (o no) en este estudio ni te quitarán ninguno de los beneficios que recibes. Tampoco tendrás que responder ninguna pregunta que te haga sentir incómodo y puedes decidir detener las entrevistas u observaciones en cualquier momento.</p> <p>Si tiene preguntas, preocupaciones o quejas; o si necesitas reportar algún perjuicio relacionado a la investigación, por favor contacta a las investigadoras:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Angélica Montoya-Ávila 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 Celular: (667)228-4401; email: montoyaa@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">O la profesora universitaria consejera de Angélica: Dra. Melinda Martín-Beltrán 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Teléfono de la oficina: (301)405-4432; email: memb@umd.edu</p>
Derechos del participante	<p>Si tienes preguntas sobre tus derechos como participante de investigación o deseas reportar algún perjuicio relacionado la investigación, por favor contacta a:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 Teléfono: 301-405-0678; email: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>Este Proyecto ha sido revisado según los procedimientos de IRB de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, sobre la investigación con sujetos humanos.</p>
Declaración de consentimiento	<p>Firmar este documento quiere decir que: tienes por lo menos 18 años de edad, has leído este formulario de consentimiento o alguien te lo ha leído, te han respondido todas tus preguntas sobre el estudio de manera satisfactoria y quieres participar de manera voluntaria en este proyecto de investigación. Recibirás una copia de este formulario firmado. <i>Si vas a participar en el proyecto de investigación, por favor escribe tu nombre y firma en la siguiente sección.</i></p>
Firma y fecha	TU NOMBRE: [Por favor, escribe en letra clara]
	TU FIRMA:
	FECHA:
	¿Aceptas ser grabado en audio ? Sí ____ No ____
	¿Aceptas ser grabado en video ? Sí ____ No ____



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Appendix D. Assent Form—Youth Coresearchers

Dear student,

I will do a **research study** to learn about students' schooling experiences at the International High School at Langley Park. This study may help educators understand how to improve the school experiences of immigrant bilingual students. I am asking you to help because you study at this school and you said you would be interested in working on this research study with me.

If you agree to participate in the study as a **youth coresearcher**, I will ask you to:

1. fill out a demographic survey (which will take 20 mins, approx.),
2. participate in 3 audio and/or video recorded interviews,
3. attend the 14 program sessions (one 3-hour session per week during afterschool hours),
4. Do up to 4 hours of additional independent work/study each week, and
5. let me observe you during the program sessions and on other 20 occasions/dates (chosen by you.)

The interviews will focus on your views of students' perceptions of the school and their schooling experiences and on your writing. For example, I will ask you: "What do you like the best about the school?" and "How much do you enjoy writing?" I will audio and video record the interviews (if you and your guardians let me do so.) Each interview will last 30 minutes (approximately) and will take place at Casa de Maryland or at the school. The interviews will be conducted in Spanish or English, depending on what language you prefer. The observations will focus on your interactions with other study participants and on what you regularly do at school and in the program. I will document what I observe by writing notes and by audio/video recording interactions among study participants at the school. Each observation will last 3 hours (approximately). You can choose when and where you will be observed.

I will keep all your information confidential and anonymous. To ensure confidentiality, I will assign you a pseudonym and remove all identifying information from the data. I will save the data on my password protected computer and/or kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. The data will be viewed in their entirety only by my faculty advisors and me.

You may decline to answer any questions, stop the observation/interview, ask questions about the study, or quit the study at any time. Being in the study is up to you; no one will be upset if you decide not to be part of the study or if you change your mind later and decide to quit the study.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this document and that you want to participate in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign this paper.

Your printed name: _____
 Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Angélica Montoya-Ávila

University of Maryland, College Park



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Appendix E. Formulario de asentimiento para jóvenes coinvestigadores

Querido estudiante:

Voy a hacer una **investigación** sobre experiencias de los estudiantes en la International High School at Langley Park. Este estudio puede ayudar a los educadores a comprender cómo mejorar las experiencias escolares de los estudiantes inmigrantes bilingües. Te estoy pidiendo el favor de que participes en la investigación porque estudias en dicha escuela, has vivido en los EE. UU. durante 4 años (o menos) y dijiste que estabas interesado en colaborar en este estudio de investigación.

Si aceptas participar en el estudio como **coinvestigador**, tendrás que:

1. completar una encuesta demográfica (lo cual, demorará 20 minutos, aproximadamente),
2. participar en 3 entrevistas grabadas en audio y/o video,
3. asistir a las 14 sesiones del programa (una sesión de 3 horas por semana en horas extraescolares),
4. hacer 4 horas (máximo) adicionales de trabajo/estudio independiente cada semana y
5. dejarme observarte durante las sesiones del programa y en otras 20 ocasiones/fechas adicionales (las que tú elijas.)

Las entrevistas se centrarán en tus experiencias y puntos de vista sobre la escuela y en tu escritura. Por ejemplo, te preguntaré: “¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de la escuela?” “¿Qué tanto te gusta escribir?” Grabaré las entrevistas en audio y video si tú y tus padres me lo permiten. Cada entrevista durará 30 minutos (aproximadamente) y se llevará a cabo en Casa de Maryland o en la escuela. Las entrevistas serán en español o inglés, según el idioma que prefieras. Las observaciones se centrarán en tus interacciones con otros participantes del estudio y en lo que haces regularmente en la escuela. Documentaré lo que observe mediante notas de campo y grabaciones de audio/video entre los participantes del estudio en la escuela. Cada observación durará 3 horas (aproximadamente). Puedes elegir cuándo y dónde serás observado.

Mantendré toda tu información confidencial y anónima. Para garantizar la confidencialidad, te asignaré un seudónimo y utilizaré ese sobrenombre en todos los datos (eliminaré toda la información que te identifique). Guardaré los datos en mi computadora, protegida con contraseña, y/o en mi oficina, en un archivador cerrado con candado. Solo mis maestros consejeros de la universidad y yo veremos todos los datos.

Podrás evadir cualquier pregunta, detener la entrevista/observación, preguntar sobre la investigación o salirte del estudio en cualquier momento. Estar en el estudio depende de ti; nadie se molestará si no firmas este documento o si cambias de opinión más tarde y decide no formar parte del estudio.

Si firmas este documento, significa que has leído este documento y que deseas participar en el estudio. Si no deseas participar en el estudio, no firmes este documento.

Tu nombre completo: _____

Tu firma: _____ Fecha: _____

¡Gracias!

Cordialmente,

Angélica Montoya-Ávila, University of Maryland, College Park



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Appendix F. Consent for Guardian of an Underage Youth Coresearcher

Project Title	Viewing Immigrant Teenagers' Schooling Experiences Through Participatory Action Research
Purpose of the Study	This is a research project being conducted by doctoral student Angélica Montoya-Ávila, under the supervision of Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán, at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of this research project is to document how students perceive the International High School at Langley Park school and their learning experiences at the school. I (Angélica) am inviting your child to participate in this research project because your child is currently a student at the International High School at Langley Park, s/he has lived in the US for 4 years or less, and s/he said s/he would be interested in participating in this research program.
Procedures	<p>If your child participates in the study, I will ask him/her to do the following: (a) complete a demographic survey, which will take 20 mins (approx.), (b) participate in 3 interviews recorded in audio and/or video, (c) attend the 14 program sessions—one 3-hour session per week during afterschool hours, (d) do up to 4 hours of additional independent work/study each week, and (e) let me observe her/him during the program sessions and on 20 additional occasions/dates.</p> <p>In the interviews, I will ask his/her opinions on the school and his/her learning experiences at the school. For example, I will ask your child: “What do you like the most about school?” S/he will not have to answer any questions that make her/him feel uncomfortable, and s/he may decide to stop the interview at any time. I will record audio/video the interviews if you and your child allow me to do so. Each interview will last 30 minutes (approx.) and will occur at Casa de Maryland or at the school. I will conduct the interviews in Spanish or English, depending on the language your child prefers. The observations will focus on what your child does in school and in the program as well as on how s/he interacts with other study participants. If you allow us, I will document your child's actions and interactions with other study participants at the school through field notes and audio/video recordings. Each observation will last 3 hours (approx.) Your child or you can choose when and where s/he will be observed.</p> <p>To ensure confidentiality, all participants (including your child) will be assigned pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the data (all identifying information will be removed). I will save the data on my password protected computer and/or kept in a locked file cabinet in my locked office. The data will be viewed in their entirety only by me and my faculty advisors.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There might be some risks from participating in this research. It is possible that participants may feel uncomfortable or anxious discussing issues regarding their educational experiences or personal background. To mitigate those risks, your child may decline to answer any questions, stop the observation/interview, or quit the study (depending on what s/he wishes.)
Potential Benefits	Your child may receive some direct benefits from participating in this research. S/he could learn about education research and writing. Moreover, this study will provide an opportunity for educators to better understand how immigrant students perceive the school and its programs in order to improve the educational opportunities for immigrant teenagers in- and out of Maryland. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through increased understanding of how to support youths' learning.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by assigning your child a pseudonym

Confidentiality	<p>and deleting your real name(s) from all data. Using those pseudonyms, I will save all data (field notes, audio/video files, survey responses, writing samples) in my password protected computer and any hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my locked home office. All recordings will be kept confidential; only my faculty advisors and me will view the data in their entirety. Some selected recorded clips may be used at professional conferences or educational events (any identifying information will be removed.)</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, I will protect your child's identity to the maximum extent possible. Your or your child's information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park, or governmental authorities if your child or someone else is in danger or if I am required to do so by law.</p>																
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your child may choose not to take part at all. If your child decides to participate in this research, your child may stop participating at any time. If your child decides not to participate in this study or stops participating at any time, your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you or your child may otherwise qualify. Your child does not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.</p> <p>If you or your child have questions, concerns, or complaints or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigators:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Angélica Montoya-Ávila 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 Cell phone: (667) 228-4401; Email: montoyaa@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or, Angélica's faculty advisor: Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Office phone: (301) 405-4432; email: memb@umd.edu</p>																
Participant Rights	<p>If you or your child have questions about your child's rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland, College Park, Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall, College Park, Maryland, 20742 Telephone: 301-405-0678; E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>																
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to let your child participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, please write your name, your child's name, and sign below.</p>																
Signature and Date	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">NAME OF PARTICIPATING CHILD</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">[Please Print]</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">YOUR NAME</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">[Please Print]</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">YOUR SIGNATURE</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">DATE</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Do you allow us to be audio record your child?</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Yes ___ No ___</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Do you allow us to be video record your child?</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Yes ___ No ___</td> </tr> </table>	NAME OF PARTICIPATING CHILD		[Please Print]		YOUR NAME		[Please Print]		YOUR SIGNATURE		DATE		Do you allow us to be audio record your child?	Yes ___ No ___	Do you allow us to be video record your child?	Yes ___ No ___
NAME OF PARTICIPATING CHILD																	
[Please Print]																	
YOUR NAME																	
[Please Print]																	
YOUR SIGNATURE																	
DATE																	
Do you allow us to be audio record your child?	Yes ___ No ___																
Do you allow us to be video record your child?	Yes ___ No ___																

Appendix G. Consentimiento de un adulto responsable del joven coinvestigador

Título del proyecto	Viendo las experiencias escolares de adolescentes inmigrantes a través de la investigación de acción participativa
Propósito del estudio	Éste es un proyecto de investigación llevado a cabo por la estudiante de doctorado Angélica Montoya-Ávila de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Melinda Martin-Beltrán. El propósito de esta investigación es documentar cómo los estudiantes perciben la International High School at Langley Park y sus experiencias de aprendizaje en la escuela. Yo (Angélica) estoy invitando a su hijo(a) a participar en esta investigación porque él/ella está estudiando en esa escuela, ha vivido en los EE. UU. durante 4 años (o menos) y dijo que estaba interesado(a) en ser parte de esta investigación.
Procedimientos	<p>Si su hijo(a) participa en el estudio, el/la tendrá que hacer lo siguiente: (a) llenar una encuesta demográfica, lo cual le tomará 20 minutos (aprox.), (b) participar en 3 entrevistas grabadas en audio y/o video, (c) asistir a las 14 sesiones del programa (una sesión de 3 horas a la semana), (d) hacer 4 horas (max.) adicionales de trabajo/estudio independiente cada semana, y (e) dejarme observarlo(a) durante las sesiones del programa y en otras 20 ocasiones/fechas (las que el/la elija). Las entrevistas se centrarán en las opiniones de el/la sobre la escuela y sus experiencias de aprendizaje. Por ejemplo, le preguntaré: “¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de la escuela?” El/la no tendrá que responder ninguna pregunta que lo haga sentir incómodo(a), y puede decidir detener la entrevista en cualquier momento. Grabaré las entrevistas en audio y video si usted y su hijo(a) me lo permiten. Cada entrevista durará 30 minutos (aprox.) y se llevará a cabo en Casa de Maryland o en la escuela. Haré las entrevistas en español o inglés, según el idioma que prefiera hijo(a). Las observaciones se enfocarán en lo que su hijo(a) hace en la escuela y en cómo el/la interactúa las interacciones con otros participantes del estudio. Si me lo permite, documentaré lo que observe mediante notas de campo y grabaciones de audio/video entre los participantes del estudio en la escuela. Cada observación durará 3 horas (aprox.). Su hijo(a) o usted pueden elegir cuándo y dónde el/la será observado.</p> <p>Para garantizar la confidencialidad, le asignaré seudónimos a todos los participantes (incluido su hijo/a) y utilizaré esos sobrenombres en todos los datos (eliminaré toda la información que identifique a su hijo/a). Guardaré los datos en mi computadora, protegida con contraseña, y/o en mi oficina en un archivador cerrado con candado. Solo mis maestros de la universidad y yo veremos todos los datos.</p>
Posibles riesgos e incomodidades	Puede haber algunos riesgos por participar en esta investigación. Es posible que su hijo(a) se sienta incómodo o ansioso al discutir temas relacionados con sus experiencias personales y educativas o con sus antecedentes personales. Para mitigar esos riesgos, su hijo(a) puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta, detener la observación/entrevista o salirse del estudio (dependiendo de lo que el/la desee).
Posibles beneficios	Su hijo(a) puede recibir algunos beneficios directos al participar en esta investigación. Podría aprender sobre investigación educativa y escritura. Además, este estudio le brindará la oportunidad a los educadores para que comprendan mejor cómo los estudiantes inmigrantes perciben la escuela y sus programas; esta información podría mejorar las oportunidades educativas para los adolescentes inmigrantes dentro y fuera de Maryland. Espero que, en el futuro, otros puedan beneficiarse de este estudio a través de una mayor comprensión de cómo apoyar el aprendizaje de los jóvenes.

<p>Confidencialidad</p>	<p>Cualquier posible pérdida de confidencialidad se minimizará al asignarle un seudónimo a su hijo(a) y al eliminar lo(s) nombre(s) reales de su hijo(a) de todos los datos. Para proteger la confidencialidad de los participantes, etiquetaré los archivos digitales con los seudónimos. Guardaré todos los datos (notas de campo, archivos de audio/video, respuestas a encuestas, textos escritos) en mi computadora, protegida por contraseña; las copias físicas de los documentos estarán en un archivador cerrado en mi oficina. Todas las grabaciones se mantendrán confidenciales. Solo yo y los maestros universitarios que guían la investigación podrán ver todas las grabaciones. Algunos clips grabados seleccionados se pueden usar en conferencias profesionales o eventos educativos (se eliminará cualquier información de identificación).</p> <p>Si escribo un manuscrito sobre este proyecto de investigación, la identidad de su hijo(a) estará protegida en la mayor medida posible. Sin embargo, la información de su hijo(a) puede compartirse con representantes de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, o las autoridades gubernamentales si usted o alguien más está en peligro o si la ley nos exige hacerlo. Las posibles excepciones a la confidencialidad incluyen casos de sospecha de abuso o maltrato infantil. Si hay razones para creer que un niño ha sido abusado o descuidado, la ley nos exige que informe de esta sospecha a las autoridades correspondientes.</p>
<p>Derecho de desistimiento y preguntas</p>	<p>La participación de su hijo(a) en esta investigación es totalmente voluntaria. Su hijo(a) puede decidir no participar por completo. Si un(a) estudiante decide participar en la investigación, puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Si un(a) estudiante decide no participar en este estudio o deja de participar en algún momento, no recibirá ninguna penalización. A los estudiantes no se les subirá ni bajará la nota por el hecho de participar (o no) en este estudio ni se les quitarán ninguno de los beneficios que reciben en la escuela. Su hijo(a) no tiene que responder ninguna pregunta que le haga sentir incómodo y puede decidir detener las entrevistas u observaciones en cualquier momento.</p> <p>Si decide dejar de participar a su hijo(a) en este estudio; si tiene preguntas, preocupaciones o quejas; o si necesita reportar algún perjuicio relacionado a la investigación, favor de contactar a las investigadoras:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Angélica Montoya-Ávila 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 Celular: (667)228-4401; email: montoyaa@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">O la profesora universitaria consejera de Angélica: Dra. Melinda Martin-Beltrán 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Teléfono de la oficina: (301)405-4432; email: memb@umd.edu</p>
<p>Derechos del participante</p>	<p>Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de investigación o desea reportar algún perjuicio relacionado la investigación, por favor contacte:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 Teléfono: 301-405-0678; E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>Este Proyecto ha sido revisado según los procedimientos de IRB de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park, sobre la investigación con sujetos humanos.</p>
<p>Declaración de consentimiento</p>	<p>Su firma indica que tiene por lo menos 18 años de edad, que ha leído este formulario de consentimiento o que alguien se lo ha leído a Ud., que sus preguntas han sido respondidas de manera satisfactoria y que accede a que su hijo(a) participe de manera voluntaria en este proyecto de investigación. Ud. recibirá una copia de este formulario firmado. Si permite que su hijo(a) participe, por favor firme abajo:</p>

Firma y fecha	NOMBRE DEL MENOR DE EDAD (Estudiante participante) [Por favor escriba en letra clara]	
	NOMBRE DEL FAMILIAR DEL NIÑO(A) [Por favor escriba en letra clara]	
	FIRMA DEL FAMILIAR DEL NIÑO(A)	
	FECHA	
	¿Permite que su hijo(a) sea grabado en audio?	Sí ____ No ____
	¿Permite que su hijo(a) sea grabado en video?	Sí ____ No ____



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Appendix H. Consent to Participate—School Staff

Project Title	Viewing Immigrant Teenagers’ Schooling Experiences Through Participatory Action Research
Purpose of the Study	This is a research project being conducted by doctoral student Angélica Montoya-Ávila, under the supervision of Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán, at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of this research project is to document high schoolers’ perceptions of and experiences at the International High School at Langley Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you work at the International High School at Langley Park and you may have important insights into the students’ schooling experiences and perceptions.
Procedures	<p>As a study participant, you will be required to (a) fill out a short demographic survey, which will take 20 mins (approx.), (b) be observed by the research team on 20 occasions/dates, and (c) participate in 2 audio and/or video recorded interviews (30 minutes each, approx..) about the school and students’ schooling experiences. One interview will occur towards the beginning of the study and the other one towards the end of the study. The interviews will occur at a time and place that is convenient to you. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you can decide to stop the interview at any time. Example interview questions may include: “What do you think students like the best about the school?” The interviews will be conducted in English.</p> <p>The observations will focus on your interactions with other study participants and on what you regularly do at school. We will document what we observe by writing notes and by audio/video recording interactions among study participants at the school. Each observation will last 2 hours (approximately). You can choose when and where you will be observed.</p> <p>To ensure confidentiality, all participants (including you) will be assigned pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the data (all identifying information will be removed). The data will be saved on a password protected computer and/or kept in a locked file cabinet in Angélica’s office. The data will be viewed in their entirety only by Angélica, her coresearchers, and her faculty advisors.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There might be some risks from participating in this research. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable or anxious discussing issues regarding your personal, professional, and educational experiences. To mitigate those risks, you may decline to answer any of my questions, stop the observation/interview, or quit the study (whatever you wish.)
Potential Benefits	There are no known direct benefits from participating in this research. However, this study will provide an opportunity for the researchers to better understand how students participate and perceive the school in order to improve the educational opportunities for immigrant teenagers in- and out of Maryland. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through increased understanding of how to support youth’s learning.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by assigning you a pseudonym and deleting your real name(s) from all data. All data (audio/video files, interview transcripts, and student writing samples) will be saved on a password-protected computer and any hard copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet in Angelica’s locked home office. All recordings will be kept confidential and will be viewed in their entirety only by the researchers and her faculty advisors. Some selected recorded clips may be used at professional conferences or educational events (any identifying information will be removed.)

	<p>If we write a manuscript about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>	
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.</p> <p>If you have questions, concerns, or complaints or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Angélica Montoya-Ávila 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742 Cell phone: (667)228-4401; Email: montoyaa@umd.edu</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or, Angélica's faculty advisor Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán 2311 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Office phone: (301)405-4432; email: memb@umd.edu</p>	
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 Telephone: 301-405-0678; E-mail: irb@umd.edu</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. <i>If you agree to participate in this research study, please write your name and sign below.</i></p>	
Signature and Date	YOUR NAME	
	[Please Print]	
	YOUR SIGNATURE	
	DATE	
	Do you allow us to be audio record you?	Yes ___ No ___
Do you allow us to be video record you?	Yes ___ No ___	

Appendix I. Observation Protocol

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION	
Date:	Location/Site:
Observer: Angélica Montoya-Ávila	Activity:
Start time- End time:	Total minutes observed:
Video/Audio file name:	Focus of the observation:

Seating arrangement/map of context:

Participants (Pseudonyms)		ISSUES TO ADDRESS
Present:	Notes (left early, etc.):	<i>Problems or issues that the researcher needs to follow up with in the following week (e.g. get in touch with Mr. X)</i> •
✓		
✓		
✓		
✓		

Summary/ Interesting points (Analytic Notes):

Appendix J. Interview Guide for School Staff

Interview Guide for School Staff # 1—Beginning of the Study

Interviewee's Pseudonym: _____ Date: ___/___/_____
 Interviewer's Name: _____ Interview setting: _____

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW

As you know, I am very interested in learning about students' writing experiences at Multicultural High School. I know you have a great insight into this issue, so please share anything that you think I should know about this topic. Remember that I will keep all your information confidential and anonymous and that you can end or stop the interview whenever you want.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your educational background and professional experiences.
2. What are your main responsibilities/roles in MHS? (*Probe: What classes/grades do you currently teach? How many students do you currently have?*)
3. Do you ask students to do research in any of those classes? If so, how do you explain the process and purpose of doing research? How do you guide students in the process of doing research?
4. How do you incorporate writing in your classes? (*Probe: How (if at all) do you teach writing or how do support your students' writing? What type of writing-related activities have you asked your students to do?*)
5. How often do students write in your class? How much do your students enjoy writing? (*Probe: In your opinion, why do they feel that way?*)
6. Based on what you have observed at MHS, what are the Spanish-English bilingual students' main strengths and challenges when it comes to writing?
7. What (if anything) have you done to help your students overcome those challenges?
8. From your perspective, how could students improve their writing?
9. Is there anything else you want to share with me? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time!

Interview Guide for School Staff # 2— End of the Study

Interviewee's Pseudonym: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Interviewer's Name: _____ Interview setting:

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW

I wanted to ask you some additional questions about your perceptions of students' writing experiences at MHS. Remember that I will keep all your information confidential and anonymous and that you can end or stop the interview whenever you want.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Writing

1. What writing projects or activities did 10th/11th graders do in your class from March to June? (*Probe: Why did you decide to that activity? What did you expect students to learn from those activities? How much have students liked those activities?*)
2. In general, for what purposes have your students used writing in your class?
3. On average, how often have your students written in you class since we last talked?
4. Did you provide any writing-related instruction from March to June? If so, what did your instruction focus on? (*Probe: Why did you decide to teach that?*)
5. From your perspective, is there any difference between writing and composing? Have you discussed that difference with your students?

Research Program & Results

6. What do you think about the research projects students conducted in the afterschool program? (*Probe: How did you and your students perceive/react to their projects?*)
7. What do you think about the students' compositions (posters, book box) and presentations? (*Probe: What were their strengths and weaknesses?*)
8. What impact do you think this project had on the participating students?
9. Have you noticed any changes in the way that the participating students wrote or talked about writing/composing? (*Probe: Why did you think that change occurred?*)
10. In your opinion, what made this project different or similar to other assignments students do (or have done) at school?

Closing

11. Do you have any additional questions or comments for me?

Thank you for your time and support!

Appendix K. Interview Guide for Youth Coresearchers—English & Spanish

Guide for Coresearcher Interview #1

* Angélica, a bilingual English-Spanish speaker, will conduct the interviews in the preferred language of student participants.

Interviewer's Name: _____ Date: ___/___/___
 Language Interview Conducted In: _____
 Interviewee's Pseudonym: _____ Code: _____

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me! I am doing these interviews to learn about writing. I want to know what you think, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Initial (personal) questions

1. How would you describe yourself as a person? (*probe*: How would your friends or family describe you?).
2. What are your main responsibilities at home? (*probe*: Do you help with household chores? Do you work?)
3. What are your plans for the future (career, family, etc.)?

Schooling experiences

4. What do you think about school? What do you like most and what do you dislike most about school?
5. How would you describe your current school and the schools where you went before? (*probe*: what are the differences between schools in your home country and schools in the United States?)
6. What is the subject you like most and the one you like least? What do you like or dislike about those subjects?
7. How are you student? (*probe*: How would your teachers describe you?).
8. What are you good at in school? What is it difficult for you at school?
9. What is a typical day like for you (in and out of school)?
10. What do you usually do after you leave school? What do you usually do on weekends?
11. Have you been enrolled in any afterschool program?

Research

12. If someone asked you what the word “research” means, what would you say?
13. When you hear the word “researcher,” what is the first thing that comes to mind? (*probe*: What images come to your mind?)
14. How do you think research is done?
15. What is research for? What is the purpose of research?
16. Have you ever done an investigation? (*probe*: What was the investigation about? How did the investigation start and how did you get involved? How did it end?)

Writing

17. How would you define the word “writing”? (*probe*: What do you think that word mean? How to explain the meaning of that word to someone who doesn't know it?)
18. What is writing for?
19. In what languages do you write? How do you write in those languages?
20. How did you learn how to write in those languages? (*probe*: How to start writing in those languages? Did anyone teach you how to write in those languages? Did you use any technique or strategy to learn to write in those languages?)
21. How much do you like to write in (language A, B, C...)?
22. What and how often do you write in (language A, B, C...)? (*probe*: Can you give me an example of when you wrote (x type of text) in (language A)? How did you feel when you wrote that?)
23. When you have or want to write a text, how do you do it? (*probe*: What “steps” do you follow to write a text in that language?) - *Repeat these questions for each of the languages you use.*
24. Do you have any difficulty when writing in (language A, B, C...)? If so, what are those difficulties? (*probe*: Can you give me an example of a time when you had that difficulty?)

Research Program

25. Why do you want to join the research program?
26. What do you hope to learn or achieve in the program?

Closing

27. Is there anything else you want to tell me? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time and interest in the program!

I am grateful to Dr. Margaret Hawkins and Dr. Martin-Beltran for their feedback on the interview questions for the youth.

Guía de entrevista para jóvenes coinvestigadores #1

* Angélica, quien es bilingüe en inglés y español, realizará las entrevistas en el idioma que los estudiantes participantes prefieran.

Nombre del entrevistador: _____ Fecha: ____ / ____ /

Lengua en que se realiza la entrevista:

Seudónimo del entrevistad@: _____ Código:

Introducción

¡Gracias por aceptar conversar conmigo! Estoy haciendo estas entrevistas para aprender más sobre la escritura. Me interesa saber lo que piensas (honestamente), así que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

Preguntas iniciales (personales)

1. ¿Cómo te describirías como persona? (*sondear*: ¿Cómo te describirían tus amigos o familiares?).
2. ¿Cuáles son tus responsabilidades en la casa? (*sondear*: ¿Trabajas o colaboras con los quehaceres de la casa?)
3. ¿Cuáles son tus planes a futuro (carrera, familia, etc.)?

Experiencias escolares

4. ¿Qué piensas de la escuela? ¿Qué es lo que más te gusta y lo que más te disgusta de la escuela?
5. ¿Cómo describirías tu escuela actual y las escuelas a las que has ido anteriormente? (*sondear*: ¿qué diferencias hay entre las escuelas de tu país natal y las escuelas de los Estados Unidos?)
6. ¿Cuál es la materia que más te gusta y la que menos te gusta? ¿Qué te gusta o disgusta de esas materias?
7. ¿Qué tal estudiante eres? (*sondear*: ¿Cómo te describirían tus maestros?).
8. ¿En qué crees que eres bueno en la escuela? ¿Qué te cuesta trabajo en la escuela?
9. ¿Cómo es un día típico para ti en la escuela?
10. Normalmente, ¿qué haces después de que sales de la escuela? ¿Qué haces los fines de semana?
11. ¿Has estado o estás inscrito en algún programa para después de la escuela?

Investigación

12. Si alguien te preguntara qué significa la palabra “investigación”, ¿qué dirías?
13. Cuando escuchas la palabra “researcher”, ¿qué es lo primero que se te viene a la mente? (*sondear*: ¿Qué imágenes se te ocurren?)
14. ¿Tú cómo crees que se hace una investigación?

15. ¿Para qué se hace o para qué sirve una investigación?
16. ¿Alguna vez has hecho una investigación? (*sondear*: ¿De qué se trató la investigación? ¿Cómo inició la investigación y cómo te involucraste en ella? ¿cómo terminó?)

Escritura

17. ¿Cómo definirías las palabras escribir y escritura? (*sondear*: ¿Qué crees que significan esas palabras? ¿Cómo explicarías el significado de esas palabras a alguien que no las sepa?)
18. ¿Para qué sirve la escritura?
19. ¿En qué idiomas escribes? ¿Qué tal escribes en esos idiomas?
20. ¿Cómo aprendiste a escribir en esos idiomas? (*sondear*: ¿Cuándo comenzaste a escribir en esos idiomas? ¿Alguien te enseñó a escribir en esos idiomas? ¿Utilizaste alguna técnica o estrategia para aprender a escribir en esos idiomas?)
21. ¿Qué tanto te gusta hacer escribir en (idioma A, B, C...)?
22. ¿Qué y con qué frecuencia escribes en (idioma A, B, C...)? (*sondear*: ¿Me puede dar un ejemplo de una vez en la que escribiste (x tipo de texto) en (idioma A)? ¿Cómo te sentiste cuando escribiste eso?)
23. Cuando tienes o quieres escribir un texto, ¿cómo lo haces? (*sondear*: ¿Qué “pasos” sigues para escribir un texto en ese idioma?) - *Repetir estas preguntas para cada uno de los idiomas que use el entrevistado.*
24. ¿Tienes alguna dificultad cuando escribes en (idioma A, B, C...)? *Si sí*, ¿cuáles son esas dificultades? (*sondear*: ¿Puedes darme un ejemplo de un momento en que tuviste esa dificultad?)

Programa para investigadores

25. ¿Por qué quieres unirme al programa de investigación?
26. ¿Qué esperas aprender o lograr en el programa?

Cierre

27. ¿Hay algo más que quieras contarme? ¿Tienes alguna pregunta para mí?

¡Gracias por tu tiempo y por interesarte en el programa!

Guide for Coresearcher Interview #2

*Interviews will be conducted in the preferred language of student participants by a bilingual English-Spanish speaker.

Interviewer's Name: _____

Interviewee's Pseudonym: _____

Interviewee's date of arrival to the US: ___ / ___ / _____

Interview Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Introduction

I want to do this interview to better understand your experience in the program and your ideas about writing. I'm interested in knowing what you think (honestly), so there are no right or wrong answers. Please try to justify (say why) your answers.

Investigation

1. Tell me a little about the research you did during the program. (*Probe*: what topic did you research? Why did you choose that topic?)
2. How did you do the research? *Probe*:
 - a. How did you choose the research method?
 - b. How did you create the research questions?
 - c. How did you collect and analyze the data?
3. How did you feel doing the research? *Probe*:
 - a. What have been the best moments (or the things you liked most) of this process?
 - b. What have been the biggest challenges you have faced during this process?
4. In the first interview, you told me that you didn't have much experience doing research and you were not sure what the research was about. Now that you have more experience...
 - a. How would you define the word "research"?
 - b. Have your research ideas changed after participating in the program?
5. In the first round of interviews, many people told me that the research simply consisted of searching for information on the internet or in books. If someone told you that now, what would you answer?
6. Some people believed that the group's research was going to only entail searching for information on the internet or in books and writing about what they learned; nothing else. These people were surprised when they could decide on the research topic and do the interviews. Why do you think these people were surprised?
7. What do you think would have been better: to find information in books on a subject that I would assign or to collect and analyze data on a subject that you chose? (*Probe*: Why do you think so?)
8. What effect do you think your research has had (or will have) at school or for other people (e.g., UMd students)? *Probe*:
 - a. What do you think will be the impact of your presentations and compositions?
 - b. Who else would you like to share your research with?

Writing

9. During the program, we wrote many things (reflections, posters, transcripts, presentation slides, etc.). What were the things that you liked writing more / less? (*Probe: Why do you think so?*)
10. How did you do to write those things?
11. After this program,
 - a. Do you like to write more, less or equal? Why?
 - b. Have your opinions about writing changed? Why? How?
 - c. Do you think the program influenced the way you write? How?
12. Now that you have more research experience, what do you think is the relationship between research and writing? (*Probe: Why do you think so?*)
13. What is the purpose of writing during a research process?

Composition

14. In the group, some people said there was a difference between "composing" and "writing."
 - a. Do you think there is any difference between these two terms?
 - b. Is there a difference between the process of writing and composing? (*Probe: Why do you think so?*)
15. What have you composed / created during this program?
16. What has been your process to create these compositions during the program? (What things have you considered when you're composing?)
17. Why did you decide to create those things?
18. Have you ever created other similar compositions? (*Probe: When did you do that? How?*)
19. How did you feel when you presented your compositions?
 - a. Do you think people react differently to the poster than to the collage / book box?
20. How different would the research process have been if we had not written or composed anything?

About the program

21. What things did you learn in the program?
22. How do you think you will use what you learned in this program in the future? How will what you learned in this program serve you in the future (to fulfill your goals and dreams)?
23. What recommendations would you give to other young people who want to participate in a research program like this?
24. What things would you change about the program?

Closing

25. Is there anything else you want to tell me? Do you have any question for me?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM!

Guía de entrevista para jóvenes coinvestigadores #2

* Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo individualmente o en parejas en el idioma que prefieran los estudiantes participantes y serán realizadas por una persona bilingüe en inglés y español.

Nombre del entrevistador: _____
 Seudónimo del entrevistad@: _____
 Fecha de llegada a los EE.UU.: _____
 Fecha de la entrevista: _____

Introducción

Quiero hacerte esta entrevista para entender mejor tu experiencia en el programa y tus ideas sobre la escritura. Me interesa saber lo que piensas (honestamente), así que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Por favor, intenta justificar (decir el porqué de) tus respuestas.

Investigación

1. Cuéntame un poco sobre la investigación que hiciste durante el programa (*sondear*: ¿qué tema investigaste? ¿por qué escogiste ese tema?)
2. ¿Cómo hiciste la investigación? *Sondear*:
 - a. ¿cómo escogiste el método de investigación?
 - b. ¿cómo creaste las preguntas de investigación?
 - c. ¿cómo recolectaste y analizaste los datos?
3. ¿Cómo te sentiste haciendo la investigación? *Sondear*:
 - a. ¿Cuáles han sido los mejores momentos (o las cosas que más te han gustado) de este proceso?
 - b. ¿cuáles han sido los mayores retos que has enfrentado durante este proceso?
4. En la primera entrevista, tú me dijiste que no tenías mucha experiencia haciendo investigaciones y no estabas muy seguro de qué se trataba la investigación. Ahora que ya tienes más experiencia...
 - a. ¿cómo definirías la palabra “investigación”?
 - b. ¿han cambiado tus ideas sobre investigación después de haber participado en el programa?
5. En la primera ronda de entrevistas, muchos chicos me dijeron que la investigación simplemente consistía en buscar información en internet o en libros. Si alguien te dijera eso ahora ¿tú qué le responderías?
6. Algunas personas creían que las investigaciones del grupo iban a ser simplemente buscar información en internet o en libros, escribir sobre lo que aprendieron y ya. Esas personas se sorprendieron cuando pudieron decidir el tema de investigación y hacer las entrevistas. ¿Por qué crees que esto sorprendió a los jóvenes?
7. ¿Qué crees que hubiera sido mejor: buscar información en libros sobre un tema que yo asignara o recolectar y analizar datos sobre un tema que ustedes eligieran? (*sondear*: ¿por qué crees eso?)

8. ¿Qué efecto crees que ha tenido (o va tener) tu investigación en la escuela o para otras personas (ej. estudiantes de UMD)?
 - a. ¿Cuál crees que será el impacto de tus presentaciones y composiciones?
 - b. ¿Con quién más te gustaría compartir tu investigación?

Escritura

9. Durante el programa, escribimos muchas cosas (reflexiones, posters, transcripciones, presentaciones, etc.) ¿Cuáles fueron las cosas que más/menos te gustaron escribir? ¿Por qué?
10. ¿Cómo hiciste para escribir esas cosas?
11. Después de este programa,
 - a. ¿te gusta escribir más, menos o igual? ¿Por qué?
 - b. ¿han cambiado tus opiniones sobre la escritura? ¿Por qué? ¿De qué manera?
 - c. ¿Crees que el programa influyó en la forma en la que escribes? ¿De qué manera?
12. Ahora que ya tienes más experiencia con la investigación, ¿cuál crees que la relación entre la investigación y la escritura? ¿Por qué? (sondear: ¿por qué crees eso?)
13. ¿Para qué sirve la escritura durante el proceso de investigación?

Composición

14. En el grupo, algunas personas dijeron que había una diferencia entre “componer” y “escribir.”
 - a. ¿Crees que hay alguna diferencia entre estos dos términos?
 - b. ¿Hay alguna diferencia entre el proceso de componer y el de escribir?
15. ¿Qué has compuesto/creado durante este programa?
16. ¿Cuál ha sido tu proceso para crear esas composiciones durante el programa? (sondear: ¿Qué cosas has tenido en cuenta cuando estás componiendo?)
17. ¿Por qué decidiste crear esas cosas?
18. ¿Alguna vez habías creado otras composiciones similares? (sondear: ¿Cuándo? ¿Cómo?)
19. ¿Cómo te sentiste cuando presentaste tus composiciones? *Sondear:*
 - a. ¿Crees que las personas reaccionan diferente al poster que al collage/book box?
20. ¿Cuán diferente habría sido el proceso de investigación si no hubiéramos escrito o compuesto nada?

Sobre el programa

21. ¿Qué cosas aprendiste en el programa?
22. ¿Cómo crees que vas a usar lo que aprendiste en este programa en un futuro? ¿Cómo te va a servir lo que aprendiste en este programa para cumplir tus metas y sueños?

23. ¿Qué recomendaciones le darías a otros jóvenes que quieran participar en un programa de investigación como este?
24. ¿Qué cosas cambiarías del programa?

Cierre

25. ¿Hay algo más que quieras decirme? ¿Tienes alguna pregunta para mí?

¡GRACIAS POR TU TIEMPO Y PARTICIPACIÓN EN EL PROGRAMA!

Appendix L. Research Journal Guidelines and Prompts

The research journal is a space where you can reflect on your learning and research processes. Below, you will find some reflection prompts¹³ that could help you get started with the reflection process. In the first 2 sessions, you will respond to the first two prompts. After session 3, you can write about any prompt (3-7) whenever you want. You can also do “free writing” in your journal, that is, you can write about anything that you want, whenever you want, until you feel all your ideas and feelings are on the paper. Please, be honest and thorough in your journal entries!

Research Journal Prompt #1—First impression

After the first program session, describe:

- How did you feel in the first session? Why did you feel that way?
- What was your first impression of the research members? Why did you get that impression?

Research Journal Prompt #2—Reflecting on the Research Process

1. Think about research you’ve done for a life decision (like where to go to college), personal interest (like learning more about a singer), or personal problem. Describe the process you used to find the information you needed.
2. Now think about the research you may have done for a school assignment. How was your process for school research different than for personal research?
3. How do you decide what information to trust when doing any type of research?
4. How much did you enjoy research? Why did you enjoy it (or not)?

Research Journal Prompt #3—Avoiding Researcher Bias

After watching a video about a student who conducted academic research about Bigfoot and discussing it in class, think about:

- how can you avoid researcher bias as you begin searching for information?
- how will you ensure that you find and use information that may be contrary to your opinion on the subject?

Research Journal Prompt #4—Developing Successful Research Topics/Questions

Think about your potential research question.

- What is your focal problem/issue?
- Why is that problem/issue important to you and to others?
- What do you need to know in order to better understand that problem?
- How can you obtain the information that you will need to understand or address that problem/issue?

Research Journal Prompt #5—General reflection on the readings and class discussions

¹³ The Research Journal Prompts were adapted from UCMerced Library (2018) *Summary - Research Journal Prompts*
http://libguides.ucmerced.edu/think_like_a_researcher/journal_prompts

As a result of what you have read and learned what are questions or insights you have and/or areas you'd like to learn more about and explore further, and why?

Research Journal Prompt #6—Reflection on data collection

- What went well today during the data collection activities? What did not work?
- What do you know now that you wished you knew before collecting the data?
- How could you/we improve data collection processes?
- What questions do you have about any of the research methods?

Research Journal Prompt #7: Research Challenges

1. What challenges are you currently facing in the program or in your research project?
2. What can you do to overcome those challenges?
3. Is there anything the research team can do to support you in overcoming those challenges?

Research Journal Prompt #8: Overall Research Reflection

Think about the research you've done the PAR program and answer each of the following questions.

1. How has your process for doing research changed since the beginning of the semester? Be specific. Give examples.
2. Describe your process for evaluating and selecting sources and participants for your research project. How did you decide which sources and participants to include and which not to include?
3. What challenges did you encounter when doing research? What strategies did you use to overcome them? Be specific. Give examples.
4. How confident are you now in your capacity to do research and write about research? How has your self-confidence level changed over the course of the semester? Be specific. Give examples.
5. Did this program and your research project help you in other classes this semester? If so, how? Be specific. Give examples.
6. Will this program and your research project help you in your future classes or after you finish high school? If so, how? Be specific. Give examples.

Appendix M. Demographic Survey for School Staff

1. What's your name and last name?
2. What's your gender identity?
3. What's your race and/or ethnicity?
4. What is your age or age range?
5. Where were you born?
6. Have you lived abroad? If yes, where and how long?
7. Do you speak a language other than English? If yes, how fluent are you in that/those language(s)?
8. What is your educational background?
9. How did you become involved in your current school?
10. How long have you been working with immigrant students?
11. How long have you been working at your current school?
12. How much coursework or professional development have you had regarding how to teach writing? Did any of those courses focus on teaching writing to immigrant students? If so, please briefly describe what you learned in those classes.
13. How comfortable do you feel teaching writing?
14. What challenges have you experienced while teaching writing? What strategies have you used to address those challenges?

Appendix N. Demographic Survey for Youth Coresearchers—English &

Spanish

1. What is your full name (first name, middle name, and your last names)?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your race and/or ethnicity?
5. Where (countries/region) were you born?
6. In which countries have you lived? How long have you lived in each of those countries?
7. What are some of the reasons your family decided to come to the U.S.?
8. Who do you live with? Write each person's name, relationship with you (mom/sibling/cousin, friend, other relative), age, and language(s) this person uses most of the time.
9. What languages do you know how to speak?
10. What languages do you understand?
11. What languages can you use to read and write? Enumerate each language (e.g., 1. Spanish, 2. English, 3. Mam)
12. How well do you read and write in each of the above listed languages?
13. What language(s) do you use when you talk to (a) your parents, (b) your siblings, (c) your friends at school, and (d) your friends in neighborhood?
14. Who are your 5 closest friends at school? Where are they from? What languages do you speak with them?
15. What kind of reading materials do you have at home? (newspapers, books, religious materials, Bible, Quran, etc.) What language are these materials?
16. What afterschool activities have you done this year?
17. What responsibilities do you have outside of school? (e.g., Take care of siblings, do household chores, work)
18. Where/how did you get your education before you came to the U.S.? Where/how did you learn how to read and write?
19. If you went to school in your home country, how are schools different than those in the U.S.?
20. How many years did you go to school before coming to the U.S.?
21. In general, which best describes the grades you used to receive in your home country? (a) A's and B's (b) B's and C's (c) C's and D's (d) D's and F's?
22. How many years have you been studying in U.S. schools?
23. Where did you go to middle school?
24. When did you start attending this school?
25. Why did you (or your family) decide to enroll you in this school?
26. In general, which best describes the grades you receive in your current school and in previous US schools? (a) A's and B's (b) B's and C's (c) C's and D's (d) D's and F's?
27. From 1 to 4 (1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest), how much do you like your current school?
28. In your opinion, what are the school's assets or positive aspects?
29. What are the main problems or weaknesses of your current school?
30. What would you like to change in this school? Why?

31. What do you want to do when you are finished with school? What type of work/profession would you like to pursue?
32. How much school do you think you need to get that job?
33. Why are you interested in the PAR project?
34. Is there anything else you want to tell me about you?

Encuesta demográfica (versión en español)

1. ¿Cuál es tu nombre completo (primer nombre, segundo nombre y apellidos)?
2. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
3. ¿Cuál es tu género?
4. ¿Cuál es tu raza y/o grupo étnico?
5. ¿En qué país/región naciste?
6. ¿En qué países has vivido? ¿Cuánto tiempo has vivido en cada una de esos países?
7. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las razones por las que su familia decidió venir a los Estados Unidos?
8. ¿Con quién vives? Escribe el nombre de cada persona, la relación con usted (madre / hermano / prima, amiga, otro pariente), edad e idioma (s) que esta persona usa la mayor parte del tiempo.
9. ¿Qué idiomas hablas?
10. ¿Qué idiomas entiendes?
11. ¿Qué idiomas puedes usar para leer y escribir? Enumera cada idioma (por ejemplo: 1. español, 2. inglés, 3. mam)
12. ¿Qué tan bien lees y escribes en cada uno de los idiomas mencionados anteriormente?
13. ¿Qué idioma(s) usas cuando hablas con (a) tus padres, (b) tus hermanos, (c) tus amigos en la escuela y (d) tus amigos en el vecindario?
14. ¿Cuáles son tus 5 amigos más cercanos en la escuela? ¿De dónde son? ¿Qué idiomas hablas con ellos?
15. ¿Qué tipo de material de lectura tienes en casa? (periódicos, libros, materiales religiosos, Biblia, Corán, etc.) ¿En qué idioma son esos materiales?
16. ¿Qué afterschool programs has hecho este año?
17. ¿Qué responsabilidades tienes fuera de la escuela? (por ejemplo, cuidar a tus hermanos, hacer labores domésticas, trabajar)
18. ¿Dónde/cómo obtuviste tu educación antes de venir a los Estados Unidos? ¿Dónde/cómo aprendiste a leer y escribir?
19. Si fuiste a la escuela en su país de origen, ¿en qué se diferencian las escuelas de tu país de las escuelas en los EE. UU.?
20. ¿Cuántos años asististe a la escuela antes de venir a los Estados Unidos?
21. ¿En general, qué calificaciones recibías en tu país de origen? a) A's and B's (b) B's and C's (c) C's and D's (d) D's and F's?
22. ¿Cuántos años has estado estudiando en las escuelas de los Estados Unidos?
23. ¿A qué middle school fuiste?
24. ¿Cuándo empezaste a asistir a esta escuela?
25. ¿Por qué decidiste tú (o tu familia) inscribirte en esta escuela?
26. ¿En general, qué calificaciones recibes en las escuelas de EEUU a las que haz asistido antes y en tu escuela actual? a) A's and B's (b) B's and C's (c) C's and D's (d) D's and F's?

27. De 1 a 4 (1 siendo el más bajo y 4 siendo el más alto), ¿cuánto te gusta de esta escuela?
28. En tu opinión, ¿cuáles son las fortalezas o aspectos positivos de esta escuela?
29. ¿Cuáles son los problemas o debilidades principales de tu escuela actual?
30. ¿Qué te gustaría cambiar en esta escuela? ¿Por qué?
31. ¿Qué quieres hacer cuando hayas terminado la escuela secundaria? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo / profesión te gustaría seguir?
32. ¿Cuánta escuela crees que necesitas para conseguir ese trabajo?
33. ¿Por qué estás interesado en el proyecto PAR?
34. ¿Hay algo más que quieras decirme sobre ti?

Appendix O. Initial List of Deductive Codes

Critical Theory/ Pedagogy

Concept	Definition
<i>Agency</i>	Individuals' capacity to act in specific sociopolitical contexts and to potentially transform the existing social orders, including regimes of power and privilege (McLaren, 1994).
<i>Conscientization</i>	"Process in which [individuals], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform reality" (Freire, 1970a, p. 27).
<i>Dialogue</i>	Communication aimed at discovering and transforming the world; it is also collective process of knowing and learning based on epistemological curiosity and on teacher-learner partnership (Freire, 1970/2018)
<i>Emancipation*</i>	Process of acknowledging and transforming oppressive realities in order to liberate both the oppressed and oppressors (Freire, 1970/2018; Glass, 2001).
<i>Historicity</i>	"The human capacity to produce culture and history even as culture and history produce human existence" (Glass, 2001, p. 20).
<i>Ideology</i>	"Framework[s] of thought" that society and its members utilize "to create order and give meaning to the social and political world in which we live" (Darder et al., 2017, p. 11).
<i>Praxis</i>	The process of reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1970/2018).

Sociocultural Theories of Learning

Concept	Definition
<i>Funds of knowledge</i>	Cultural-historical skills, resources, and bodies of knowledge that can be leveraged to provide students with enhanced learning experiences (Moll, Armanti, Neff, & González, 1992).
<i>Scaffolding</i>	Support and guidance that adults (or more capable peers) may provide to learners in order to help them carry out a challenging task that is beyond their unassisted efforts (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).
<i>Translanguaging*</i>	Deployment of people's "full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined

Concept	Definition
	boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281).
<i>Zone of proximal development (ZPD)*</i>	“The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978, p. 86).

Writing/Literacy Scholarship

Concept	Definition
<i>Critical literacy</i>	Beliefs, values, and behaviors focused on consuming and producing texts aimed to bring about sociopolitical change and reduce social inequities.
<i>Explicit writing instruction</i>	Direct and systematic teaching of writing strategies, processes, and/or structures (Graham & Perin, 2007).
<i>Literacy events</i>	Observable activities in which a written, visual, or multimodal text plays a role in participants’ interactions (Heath, 1982; King, 2013; Morrell, 2007b).

Note. I considered all the listed concepts during the initial phases of data analysis; however, in those phases, I found that some concepts –marked with an asterisk (*) in the tables above— were not particularly helpful in interpreting the collected data and/or answering my research questions.

Appendix P. Dissertation Timeline

Stage	Time Frame
Dissertation Proposal Writing and Defense	November 2018 - January 2019
IRB Process (at UMd and School County)	November 2018 - February 2019
Stage I (before starting the program)	February 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coresearcher and teacher/administrator recruitment • round 1 of interviews and artifact collection • memoing 	
Stage II (during the program)	Mid-February – July/August 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ongoing data collection—interviews, journal entries, fieldnotes • recursive data organization, preparation, and transcription • memoing • preliminary data analyses • member checking 	
Stage III (after the program)	September 2019 - January 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensive data analysis, • memoing • drafting and revising research reports • member checking 	
Final Dissertation Defense and Revisions	March – April 2020

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