

gender<ed> thoughts

**New Perspectives in
Gender Research**

Working Paper Series

2026, Volume 5

Karol Gianina Marquez
Olivera

Venezuelan Adolescent
Girls Confronting Gender-
Based Violence and
Gendered Xenophobia in
Peruvian Schools

Mit einem Kommentar von
Alina Potts

gender<ed> thoughts

New Perspectives in Gender Research
Working Paper Series

(ISSN 2509-8179)

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Carolina Borda, Anukriti Dixit, Marija Grujić, Maximiliane Hädicke, Lydia Ayame Hiraide, Yves Jeanrenaud, Sandra Lang, Yvonne Schüpbach, Julia Wartmann

Official Working Paper Series of the Göttingen Centre for Gender Studies (GCG)

By 2017, the Göttingen Centre for Gender Studies launched the working paper series Gender<ed> Thoughts as a scholarly platform for discussion and exchange on Gender Studies. The series provides visibility for the work of affiliates of the Göttingen Centre and allows them to publish preliminary and project-related results.

All contributions to the series undergo thorough peer review. Wherever possible, we publish comments by renowned scholars accompanying each contribution. The series aims to foster interdisciplinary exchange among the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Life Sciences, and invites researchers to publish their findings on Gender Studies. If you would like to comment on existing or future contributions, please get in touch with the editors-in-chief. The series is open to theoretical discussions on established and new approaches in Gender Studies, as well as results based on empirical data or case studies. Additionally, the series aims to reflect on gender as an individual and social perspective in academia and everyday life.

All papers are published Open Access under a Creative Commons license, currently CC BY-SA 4.0, with the license text available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/de/>

2026, Volume 5

Karol Gianina Marquez Olivera

Venezuelan Adolescent Girls Confronting Gender-Based Violence and Gendered Xenophobia in Peruvian Schools

Suggested Citation

Karol Gianina Marquez Olivera (2026). Venezuelan Adolescent Girls Confronting Gender-Violence and Gendered Xenophobia in Peruvian Schools. Gender(ed) Thoughts, Working Paper Series, Vol 5, p. 1–19.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47952/gro-publ-415>

Göttingen Centre for Gender Studies

Project Office
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
Centrum für Geschlechterforschung
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 7
37073 Göttingen
Germany
genderedthoughts@uni-goettingen.de | www.gendered-thoughts.de



Venezuelan Adolescent Girls Confronting Gender-Based Violence and Gendered Xenophobia in Peruvian Schools

A Feminist Decolonial Participatory Perspective

*Karol Gianina Marquez Olivera*¹

¹ Cofounder of Quinta Ola; gianina@quintaola.org

 [0009-0006-8971-9872](https://doi.org/10.1009-0006-8971-9872)

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel untersucht, wie venezolanische Mädchen im Teenageralter in peruanischen Schulen mit geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt und geschlechtsspezifischer Fremdenfeindlichkeit umgehen. Auf der Grundlage feministischer, dekolonialer und partizipativer Forschung mit jugendlichen Aktivistinnen in Lima wird argumentiert, dass Schulen als Orte sich überschneidender Gewalt fungieren, an denen die Kolonialität der Macht und des Geschlechts Migrantinnen anhand von Merkmalen wie Akzent, Kleidung und Nationalität – und nicht allein anhand der Hautfarbe – rassifiziert. Dennoch sind diese Mädchen keine passiven Opfer: Sie üben durch feministische und interkulturelle Praktiken Selbstbestimmung und Widerstand aus und entwickeln eigene Konzepte, um die Gewalt und die Identitäten, mit denen sie sich auseinandersetzen, zu benennen. Indem die Studie ihre Stimmen als epistemische Akteure in den Mittelpunkt rückt, definiert sie diese neu als politische Akteurinnen und Wissensproduzentinnen und fordert eine Bildungsreform, die auf feministischen, interkulturellen und rechtsbasierten Pädagogiken beruht.

Schlagworte

venezolanische Mädchen im Jugendalter; geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt; geschlechtsspezifische Fremdenfeindlichkeit; dekolonialer Feminismus; feministische partizipative Forschung; Bildungswesen in Peru.

Abstract

This article examines how Venezuelan adolescent girls confront gender-based violence and gendered xenophobia in Peruvian schools. Drawing on feminist, decolonial, and participatory research with teenage activists in Lima, it argues that schools function as sites of intersecting violence, where the coloniality of power and of gender racializes migrant girls through markers such as accent, dress, and nationality, not skin color alone. Yet these girls are not passive victims: they exercise agency and resistance through feminist and intercultural practices, generating their own concepts to name the violence and identities they navigate. By centering their voices as epistemic agents, the study reframes them as political actors and knowledge producers, and calls for educational reform grounded in feminist, intercultural, and rights-based pedagogies.

Keywords

Venezuelan adolescent girls; gender-based violence; gendered xenophobia; decolonial feminism; feminist participatory research; education in Peru

Venezuelan Adolescent Girls Confronting Gender-Based Violence and Gendered Xenophobia in Peruvian Schools: A Feminist Decolonial Participatory Perspective

In the last decade, Latin America has witnessed one of the largest migratory crises in its history, with approximately 7.7 million Venezuelans fleeing the country between 2014 and early 2024 due to persistent political, economic, and social instability (UN Migration 2022; UNHCR USA 2024). Peru, which currently hosts around 1.6 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees, ranks as the second largest host country after Colombia (GTRM Perú 2023). The capital region of Lima-Callao alone shelters over one million Venezuelans, forming the highest concentration of this diaspora outside their homeland. Among this population, nearly 450,000 are children and adolescents, who often face multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities related to migration, discrimination, and access to basic rights (GTRM Perú 2023; INEI 2022).

Despite the significant role that schools play in promoting human development, inclusion, and protection, they have increasingly become sites where xenophobic discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV) intersect, particularly affecting Venezuelan girls and adolescents. National statistics reveal that adolescents are the age group most affected by discrimination, followed by younger children (INEI 2022), and that many face ongoing economic hardship, insecurity, and stigmatization (GTRM Perú 2023; MIMP 2024). A comprehensive Joint Needs Analysis conducted by GTRM Perú (2023) identified entrenched stereotypes and discriminatory narratives, specifically against Venezuelan women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals, as key factors marginalizing their identities and limiting their participation in educational and social life. Nevertheless, a lack of disaggregated data and gender-sensitive research has rendered the specific experiences of Venezuelan adolescent girls invisible in both public policy and academic literature.

Addressing this gap is an academic, political, and ethical imperative. Centering the voices and lived experiences of Venezuelan adolescent girls is essential to understanding how systems of oppression intersect in their daily lives, and how they actively resist and transform these conditions. Schools are key institutions in the socialization of rights, belonging, and dignity, yet they can

also function as sites of exclusion, retraumatization, and impunity.

Grounded in Latin American feminist and decolonial thought, particularly the notions of the colonality of power and of gender (Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000), Rita Segato's (2003, 2018) framing of gender-based violence as a political, expressive phenomenon structured by the mandate of masculinity and a 'pedagogy of cruelty', and Ochy Curiel's (2007) anti-racist decolonial critique, a feminist, decolonial, and participatory approach enables a deeper analysis of how adolescent girls confront and reinterpret structural violence, while also illuminating the affective and collective dimensions of their agency. By recognizing these girls as political actors and knowledge holders rather than mere victims, the study contributes to a more inclusive and justice-oriented understanding of migration, education, and gender-based violence.

This article deepens a situated understanding of how Venezuelan adolescent girls in Peru experience gender-based violence and gendered xenophobic discrimination within school settings. It has three main objectives: (1) to contribute to context-specific knowledge on the intersecting forms of violence faced by migrant girls in educational institutions; (2) to showcase the agency strategies developed by the girls themselves, along with promising educational practices that have supported their empowerment and collective resistance; and (3) to reflect on the role and ethical-political value of feminist decolonial participatory research in addressing these intertwined forms of violence. These aims are grounded in a broader commitment to social and epistemic justice, which affirms adolescent girls as producers of knowledge, political subjects, and protagonists of educational and social transformation.

The article is structured as follows: the first section outlines the feminist, decolonial, and intersectional theoretical frameworks that inform the analysis. The second section presents the methodological approach, with an emphasis on participatory strategies, ethical commitments, and the author's positionality. The third section discusses the main findings, organized around three key themes: the reproduction of intersecting violences within schools; the forms of resistance and agency enacted by Venezuelan girls; and the role of feminist educational practices in fostering empowerment. Finally, the article reflects on the epistemological and political implications of conducting participatory research with adolescent girls and concludes with a call for more justice-oriented, context-sensitive approaches to gender-based violence prevention in educational settings.

1. The Peruvian Context: Venezuelan Migration and Xenophobia

Research on Venezuelan migration in Latin America has grown in recent years, documenting key challenges such as socioeconomic integration, discrimination, and access to rights in host countries. In the Peruvian context, various studies have underscored the prevalence of xenophobia and institutional racism targeting Venezuelan migrants, particularly in moments of political tension or economic crisis (Esipova et al., 2020; IOP 2021; World Bank 2019b). Analyses of national attitudes reveal widespread stigma: 70.5% of Peruvians view Venezuelan migration negatively, while 64.3% acknowledge discrimination against Venezuelans in the country (IOP 2021). Cécile Blouin and Cristina Zamora Gómez (2022: 184) highlight how these attitudes are shaped by deeper historical patterns of racialization and inequality, which construct Venezuelan migrants as “unwelcome intruders” within public discourse. However, while these studies provide valuable insights into societal perceptions, they overwhelmingly focus on adult populations and rarely explore how discriminatory attitudes manifest in essential spaces for socialization and holistic development, such as schools.

2. Gendered Violence, Education, and the Invisibility of Adolescent Girls

Several reports and qualitative studies centered in migratory process in Peru have pointed to xenophobic stereotypes that frame Venezuelan women and girls as hypersexualized, morally deviant, or criminally suspicious (Pérez 2023; Asca et al. 2020; Pérez and Freier 2023), resulting in a negative migratory experience (Bartels et al., 2023). These gendered and racialized narratives contribute to increased exposure to sexual harassment, GBV, and social exclusion, often with impunity. Nonetheless, the literature tends to conflate the experiences of adult and adolescent females, thereby overshadowing the nuanced experiences of migrant girlhood and youth. Moreover, intersectional analyses of how age, gender, nationality, class, and race combine to shape the experiences of young migrants, particularly in school settings, are still largely absent from the academic conversation.

Studies focusing on the right to education for Venezuelan minors in Peru have identified a series of structural barriers, ranging from bureaucratic obstacles to economic precarity and xenophobic discrimination during enrollment and in classrooms (Alcázar and Balarin 2020, 2021; Dedios 2022; Save the Children 2022; UNICEF 2021; World Bank 2019b). However, these analyses often treat school access and retention as technocratic issues,

without addressing the role of GBV or the power dynamics embedded within educational institutions. Plan International (2021), an international organization focused on children's rights and girls' equality, offers one of the few studies adopting feminist and human rights lenses to examine how Venezuelan refugee and migrant girls across Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru experience xenophobia and GBV as intertwined forms of exclusion. Nevertheless, the study's limited country-specific analysis, reliance on survey data, and lack of participatory methods restrict its ability to capture the situated experiences and knowledges of girls in Peru.

Other research confirms the prevalence of GBV against Venezuelan women in Peru (Amnesty International 2022a; Oxfam 2019; Pérez and Ugarte 2021; Plan International Deutschland 2022) but rarely extends this focus to minors under the age of eighteen. Even studies that adopt an intersectional lens tend to document women's vulnerabilities rather than explore their agency or resistance (Asca et al. 2020; Pérez and Ugarte 2021). While Luisa Feline Freier and Andrea Kvietok (2022) acknowledge the resilience and resistance strategies employed by Venezuelan women, the agency of girls and adolescents remains understudied.

Moreover, few studies engage with feminist or decolonial methodologies that center the voices of migrant girls themselves. Civil society reports have raised concerns about the risks faced by adolescent girls, particularly in urban contexts marked by patriarchy, racism, and inequality (GTRM Perú 2023; MIMP 2024), yet these perspectives have not been sufficiently integrated into academic literature or public policy. This disconnection underscores a broader pattern in migration research, where the lived experiences of girls are either rendered invisible or subsumed under adult-centric frameworks.

Studies that focus on access to education tend to adopt technocratic or policy-oriented approaches, overlooking how structural and symbolic violence operate within school spaces. There is a notable lack of feminist, decolonial, and intersectional research that foregrounds Venezuelan adolescent girls as knowledge producers and political agents. Little is known about how they interpret, navigate, and resist the overlapping violences they face in schools, spaces that should function as sites of protection, yet often replicate broader societal exclusions.

3. Theoretical Framework: A Latin American Feminist and Decolonial Lens

GBV and xenophobic discrimination against Venezuelan adolescent girls in Peruvian schools requires a conceptual framework rooted in Latin American feminist thought. This tradition offers situated, contextually rich understandings of how power operates through intersecting structures of gender, race, class, age, and migratory status. Rather than importing frameworks from the Global North, Latin American feminism foregrounds enduring colonial hierarchies, social inequalities, and historical exclusions that shape the everyday realities of girls and women in the region (Curiel 2007; Lugones 2010; Segato 2003, 2014, 2018). These approaches allow for a critical examination of schools as both educational spaces and institutions where violence, inequality, and resistance are (re)produced and negotiated. A Latin American feminist lens is particularly suited to this study because the oppressions facing Venezuelan migrant girls in Peru are rooted in regional histories of racial and colonial hierarchy that frameworks developed in the Global North tend to overlook.

The concept of gender is central to this analysis. Marta Lamas (2022) defines gender as a cultural system of meanings and expectations attached to biological sex, one that regulates behavior, identity, and social value through the attribution of “feminine” and “masculine” traits. These traits are learned through socialization and encoded in institutions, discourses, and everyday interactions. Building on this, Marcela Lagarde (1996) emphasizes that gender is not a static identity, but a social construct shaped by historical, political, and cultural forces. Gender norms are internalized through lifelong processes and operate through power relations that sustain systems of domination and subordination (Lagarde 1996: 30). As Damaris Barragán-Gamba (2015) notes, this feminist perspective has been key to understanding how gender identities intersect with structural oppressions such as racism and classism, illuminating how discrimination and violence against girls and women are embedded in the social fabric of Latin America.

Decolonial feminism, as articulated by Curiel (2007) provides a critical lens to analyze how GBV and xenophobic discrimination operate within broader systems of coloniality and power. Curiel critiques the Eurocentric and hegemonic tendencies of mainstream feminism, arguing for a decolonial approach that recognizes how interlocking oppressions such as racism, classism, cisheteronormativity, and nationalism structure the lived realities of women and girls in Latin America. Central to this approach is the distinction between the colonial period as a historical era and coloniality as its enduring aftermath. As Anibal Quijano (2000) argues, the

coloniality of power is a classification of populations around the idea of race that originated in colonialism but continues to organize labor, knowledge, and authority in contemporary Latin America. María Lugones (2010) extends this analysis through the coloniality of gender, showing how colonial domination imposed a hierarchical, racialized gender system that still shapes who is recognized as fully human. Intersectionality, in this context, is less a tool for acknowledging diverse identities than a method for examining how violence is embedded in the institutional and symbolic arrangements of societies still structured by coloniality.

A central mechanism through which coloniality operates is racialization, understood here as the social process by which groups are marked as different and ranked within these hierarchies, rather than as a fixed or biological attribute (Campardo 2025: 112-113). Crucially, racialization is not reducible to skin color or phenotype; it also operates through markers such as socioeconomic status, immigration status, and cultural difference (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, and Organista 2014: 4).

In Peru, where racism has historically shifted from race toward culture and class, markers such as accent, dress, and the use of public space become signs through which difference is read and policed, and nationality itself can operate as a racializing mark, so that being identified as Venezuelan triggers exclusion even in the absence of phenotypical difference (Blouin and Zamora Gómez 2022). Read through the coloniality of power (Quijano 2000), this process shows how the colonial classification of populations by race persists in the everyday marking of migrant girls. In Segato's terms (2014), the school acts as a primary state apparatus that normalizes a modern-colonial ethos *criollo*. This masculine, deeply exclusionary ethos operates as a homogenizing machine that disciplines subjects to expunge their alterity to fit a universalized, white-patriarchal mold, designating any radical difference—such as that of the migrant girl—as an 'anomaly' to be actively policed, privatized, and subdued. Decolonial feminism seeks to dismantle those frameworks entirely, making space for alternative ways of knowing, resisting, and existing. This epistemological shift is especially relevant when analyzing the experiences of adolescent girls whose age, migrant status, and race place them at the margins of both social protection systems and feminist scholarship.

The work of Rita Segato (2003, 2014, 2018) deepens this analysis by conceptualizing GBV as a cultural and structural expression of patriarchal power. Segato insists that violence must be understood as systematic and

structural, rather than as the dispersed, sporadic, or anomalous phenomenon portrayed by the media (Segato 2014: 48-49). Segato argues that gendered, racial, and class-based violence is produced and embodied through social institutions such as the family, the church, and the school, which discipline subjects into reproducing, or resisting, these hierarchies. For Segato, "The normality of the system is a violent normality" that depends on the everyday demoralization of subalternized subjects, in which racism and sexism operate as intersecting, automatic mechanisms that corrode the self-worth of those they target (Segato 2003: 119-121). Within schools, this manifests in the silencing of girls' voices, the trivialization of their complaints, and the normalization of racialized and sexualized harm, a "moral violence" so routinized that it often escapes recognition and redress. This constitutes what Segato terms 'moral violence'—the invisible mortar (argamasa) that recycles and cements status hierarchies in everyday routines (2003:17). This moral violence acts as a 'nullifying' and 'foreclosing' force; by ignoring or devaluing the migrant girl's suffering, the school effectively 'does not see her', thereby denying her the status of a valid interlocutor and training the broader student body in the automatic, unreflective reproduction of racism and sexism. Segato therefore underscores the pedagogical dimension of violence: through what she later calls the pedagogies of cruelty, institutions socialize subjects into racialized, misogynistic, and exclusionary norms (Segato 2018). Her work calls for an urgent reimagining of education as a feminist space for transformation, where new relations can be cultivated and the structural roots of violence actively challenged.

Latin American feminist thought also places significant emphasis on agency, autonomy, and collective resistance as key dimensions in confronting GBV and structural oppression. Lagarde (2009), Segato (2016), and Curiel (2007) understand resistance less as isolated acts of defiance than as relational and collective practices that emerge in contexts of shared vulnerability and struggle. Lugones (2021: 157) underscores the importance of embracing the fluidity of identities and creating spaces of solidarity that disrupt colonial and patriarchal categorizations.

In the context of Venezuelan adolescent girls in Peru, these frameworks are crucial for analyzing how young migrants resist violence, both through visible activism and through everyday actions of survival, dignity, and mutual support. These frameworks are crucial for analyzing how young migrants exercise agency, both through visible activism and through everyday actions of survival, dignity, and mutual support.

José Renkens et al. (2022: 11-12) highlight that refugee agency often takes subtle, non-confrontational forms, such as seeking distraction or relief (through nature, music, exercise, or recalling positive memories), enduring and surviving hardship, drawing on faith and social support, and quietly refusing help that does not fit their needs. In a similar vein, Lirio Gutiérrez Rivera and Luisa Delgado Mejía (2022) show how women exercise agency through everyday coping strategies under conditions of violence and constrained choices. Feminist resistance is also epistemological: Tania Martínez Portugal (2020) reminds us that it challenges dominant ways of producing knowledge and builds alternative frameworks rooted in lived experience. These frameworks also foreground visibility as an analytical axis. For migrant adolescent girls, becoming visible is double-edged: hypervisibility exposes them to racialized and sexualized scrutiny, while invisibility erases their experiences from research, policy, and protection. Their agency therefore includes the political work of deciding when and how to be seen, and of claiming recognition on their own terms. This study embraces that vision by positioning adolescent girls as political subjects whose knowledge and resistance contribute to broader struggles for social and epistemic justice.

4. Methodology: A Feminist Activist Research Approach

This study was grounded in a Feminist Activist Research (FAR) approach (Biglia 2007), which integrates feminist theory, critical social inquiry, and activist practice. FAR was developed by feminist movements in Latin America as a response to the need for ethical, situated, and transformative knowledge production on issues such as GBV, discrimination, and structural inequality (Chinchilla and Hass 2007). This methodology challenges the conventional separation between researcher and participant, emphasizing collaborative processes that foreground women and girls as epistemic agents. It also seeks to dismantle patriarchal and colonial power dynamics within research itself, aligning knowledge production with broader struggles for social justice and gender equality. FAR provided the epistemological and methodological foundation for exploring the intersecting experiences of GBV and gendered xenophobia among Venezuelan adolescent girls in Lima's formal education system, while centering their voices, agency, and resistance strategies.

My adoption of this approach was also informed by my positionality as a Peruvian feminist activist, gender specialist, mentor and as internal migrant myself. This

location shaped the design of the study: my experience co-founding the feminist organization Quinta Ola and mentoring adolescent girls enabled trust-based access and informed the horizontal, workshop-based methodology, which built on activities and agreements the participants already knew. It also shaped interpretation, requiring ongoing reflexivity about the power asymmetries between researcher and participants, and a commitment to Global South feminist epistemologies that foreground the girls' own framings rather than imposing external categories (Rodrigues, 2022; Potts et al., 2022). This perspective allowed me to engage with participants as co-creators of knowledge with political stakes in the struggle against GBV and xenophobic violence, rather than as mere subjects of inquiry. I also drew from feminist research traditions that validate lived experience as a source of insight and treat research as a form of advocacy and accountability to marginalized communities (Vargas Martínez and Araiza Díaz 2021: 101).

The fieldwork was conducted in June 2024 and involved three groups of participants: Venezuelan adolescent girl activists, Venezuelan mothers, and Peruvian feminist educators. Two 4-hour participatory workshops and two 1-hour group discussions were held with eleven teenage activists, aged 13 to 17, on June 15th and 16th. Their activism spanned digital advocacy, school student councils, and multi-stakeholder spaces for dialogue involving international cooperation agencies and civil society, focusing on gender-based violence, comprehensive sexuality education, and the rights of migrant and refugee adolescents.

These sessions were designed following feminist participatory methodologies developed for adolescent girls in the Global South, particularly those focused on GBV and discrimination (Potts et al. 2022; Raising Voices and SVRI 2020; The Global Women's Institute 2020). To make these sessions participatory, the workshops were structured around the activists' own expertise and advocacy experience. Each session opened with collectively held ground rules that the participants themselves had previously proposed and that were revisited and reaffirmed together, establishing the space as horizontal and co-owned. Activities offered multiple modes of expression, including writing, drawing, symbols, and group discussion, so that participants could engage in the ways they found most comfortable. In the first workshop, a "river of life" exercise, in which participants drew the journey of migrant girls as a river with its bends, currents, and milestones, traced their shared trajectories and surfaced the experiences that shaped them. Group work on the four expressions of power (power to, power

with, power within, and power over) (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002) and on gender stereotypes used collective drawing and gallery walks, where each group's poster was displayed and annotated by the others, to make visible how power operates in schools. School and body mapping, in which participants drew a typical school and the outline of a girl's body, allowed participants to identify safe and unsafe spaces, the impacts of gender-based violence, and the strengths and resources girls draw on to resist it.

The second workshop revisited the concepts of xenophobia and aporophobia, a term coined by the philosopher Adela Cortina (2017) to name the aversion to and rejection of the poor, and used empathy mapping, an exercise in which participants imagined what a Venezuelan girl in a Peruvian school sees, hears, says, feels, and does, to analyze the intersecting experiences of Afro, LGBTQ+, and low-income Venezuelan girls, followed by collective action planning and resource mapping, in which participants identified the internal and external resources girls can draw on to resist discrimination and violence. Each workshop closed with a healing circle and affirmation ritual that integrated emotional care into the research process. Although the workshops followed a planned sequence of activities, the structure remained deliberately flexible: the participants guided the direction and pace of each session, and more time was devoted to dialogue and collective reflection because they chose to prioritize it. Throughout, they generated analytical content by building collectively on the knowledge developed through their activism, including their own vocabulary for naming the violence and identities they navigate, which is taken up in the findings, while I facilitated and took part alongside them.

Additionally, seven semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted: four with Venezuelan mothers (June 14th–16th) and three with Peruvian feminist educators during the last two weeks of June 2024. These adults were selected for their close involvement in the lives and education of migrant girls, offering complementary insights into institutional practices and community-based responses.

All participants were recruited through the feminist organization Quinta Ola, a Peruvian grassroots feminist organization that advocates for the rights of girls and young women and runs programs empowering Peruvian, migrant, and refugee adolescents through human rights education, feminist mentorship, and intergenerational and intercultural support networks. The organization served as an institutional ally throughout the research process. An initial meeting with the organization allowed co-designing

the research scope and reviewing ethical safeguards. Quinta Ola facilitated access to participants and helped implement safeguarding protocols. Consent forms and information sheets, adapted from University College London's ethical standards, were shared in advance. Consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed of their rights to withdraw at any point. Pseudonyms are used throughout this article to preserve anonymity.

Recognizing the sensitive nature of GBV and xenophobia, the study intentionally did not ask direct questions about participants' firsthand experiences of violence. Instead, it created space for them to discuss these issues in the context of their advocacy work. When participants chose to share personal stories, these were received with care and without interruption, affirming the research space as one of feminist listening, dignity, and mutual respect.

A key limitation of this study lies in its scope and sampling. The research focused on a small group of eleven Venezuelan adolescent girl activists residing in Lima, which limits the geographic and socio-demographic diversity of the sample. Working specifically with adolescent girl activists was a deliberate, epistemologically grounded choice. As the literature review shows, research on migrant girls has tended to be adult-centric and to offer few intersectional accounts, and a feminist, decolonial stance disrupts the paradigm of who is considered able to hold voice and produce knowledge, positioning these adolescents as experts on the issues that affect them.

This choice shapes the findings without narrowing them to the activists alone: as advocates embedded in their communities, the participants speak from their own experience and from what they have witnessed in the lives of other Venezuelan adolescent girls around them, offering a broad, mural-like view of what these girls face. At the same time, these findings work like a spiral, opening a door into dynamics that would need to be explored in greater depth, and across other regions, to capture the fuller range of adolescent girls' experiences. This regional point matters because Peru's pronounced centralism means that access to resources, protection, and spaces for participation varies considerably depending on where one lives; my own work with adolescents in regions such as Piura and Tumbes suggests these resources are markedly more limited outside the capital.

Similarly, the adult participants, four Venezuelan mothers and three feminist educators, were also based in Lima, although some had experience working in other

cities such as Trujillo, Piura, and Tumbes. These constraints were shaped by limited time and funding. While the study does not aim to generalize, it offers a situated and deeply contextualized account of violence, agency, and resistance, which can inform broader discussions on GBV prevention, inclusive education, and the rights of migrant girls in Latin America.

5. Findings: Between Intersecting Violence and Feminist Resistance

Schools as Sites of Intersecting Violence

Testimonies from Venezuelan adolescent girls and their families reveal that formal educational settings, where girls typically spend over seven hours a day, are sites where GBV, xenophobia, racism, and LGBTQ+ discrimination converge. Far from being protective environments, many Peruvian schools emerge as places of tension, marginalization, and retraumatization. The violence faced by Venezuelan students spans from verbal and physical aggression to sexual harassment, exclusion, and symbolic humiliation—often perpetrated by both peers and school personnel. As Sol, a feminist educator, powerfully stated, “schools are inherently violent places,” where xenophobic bullying and gendered aggressions are normalized and often left unaddressed.

This systemic violence begins as early as the enrollment process and extends throughout the academic year. Teachers and principals—key figures meant to ensure student safety—are frequently cited in testimonies as complicit or passive in the face of discrimination. Diana and Maya, teenage activists, recall teachers who trivialized their experiences of peer harassment, often mocking their accents or attire. Other participants recount instances where Venezuelan girls were blamed for “provoking” violence, or where teachers invoked harmful stereotypes to question their morality. The notion that certain bodies—particularly those racialized, feminized, and migrant—are inherently suspect or “excessively sexual” reflects a pervasive form of gendered xenophobic violence. As Karina, an activist, noted, school authorities often act only when incidents affect the institution's public image: “If students are in uniform, the school intervenes. If not, it turns a blind eye.” These double standards reveal a disturbing prioritization of institutional reputation over student well-being.

These dynamics of exclusion and hypervigilance profoundly affect girls' sense of belonging, safety, and identity. The pressure to conform is exacerbated by school environments that discourage cultural differences and

reward assimilation. Several activists described engaging in “masking” behaviors—modifying their accent, suppressing expressions of affection, or altering their appearance—to avoid becoming targets of xenophobic or gendered harassment. As Laite shared, “Many Venezuelan girls feel compelled to alter their behavior and appearance to fit in.” The cost of these adaptations is high: anxiety, depression, and feelings of dislocation are common, particularly for girls navigating multiple forms of marginalization, including racism and LGBTQ+ phobia. Gladys, a Venezuelan mother, described how her daughter developed insomnia and anxiety due to the hostile school climate and pressure to adapt.

Students also report that cultural stereotypes—reinforced by teachers, media, and social networks—fuel their discrimination and exclusion. The recurring trope of the hypersexualized or “dirty” Venezuelan woman is particularly harmful. Libertad explains that “you are either seen as a ‘clean’ Venezuelan or a ‘dirty’ one,” the latter associated with poverty, deviance, and criminality. This clean/dirty distinction is itself a form of racialization: in Peru, race is marked less by skin color alone than by signs such as accent, dress, and perceived hygiene and class, which here attach to nationality, so that being read as “dirty” comes to stand for being migrant and poor (Blouin and Zamora Gómez, 2022). These binaries are gendered and racialized: girls read as lighter-skinned, soft-spoken, well-presented, or high-achieving may be tolerated, while those whose accent, appearance, or background marks them as racialized and migrant face harsher scrutiny and exclusion.

Activists also note that LGBTQ+ students are often silenced or mocked. Mika recounted being advised by a teacher to “hide who you are to avoid problems.” These experiences underscore how power hierarchies within schools are reinforced through nationalist, patriarchal, and heteronormative norms that determine who belongs and who does not.

The normalization of violence within schools is not merely the result of individual prejudice, but of institutional neglect and policy gaps. Although Peru has adopted policies aimed at promoting inclusive education and preventing gender-based violence, testimonies reveal a stark gap between policy and implementation. Sol, an education specialist, explained that the success of these policies largely depends on the commitment of individual principals and teachers—many of whom lack training in gender, interculturality, or human rights. Luna, a feminist mentor, further emphasized that systemic barriers—such as conservative political pressures and the undermining of

comprehensive sexuality education—prevent meaningful change. As a result, Venezuelan girls remain unprotected in school spaces where xenophobia and GBV are often minimized or ignored.

Media-fueled stereotypes further complicate the school experience of Venezuelan girls. Students and mothers alike highlighted how news coverage portraying Venezuelans as criminals, prostitutes, or beggars permeates classroom discourse and WhatsApp parent groups, influencing how migrant students are treated. These messages contribute to a school climate in which cultural differences are exoticized, ridiculed, or rejected. As Libertad shared, “In higher-income schools, we’re seen as curiosities or pets,” underscoring how discrimination shifts in tone but remains rooted in dehumanization. These testimonies reflect not only the burden of external hostility, but also the emotional toll of internalized oppression and forced assimilation. The girls’ experiences illuminate the urgent need to reconfigure educational institutions—not only through stronger policies and enforcement, but by transforming the very logics of power, normativity, and belonging that shape the school environment.

Agency and Resistance through Feminist and Intercultural Educational Practices

In contrast to the pervasive violence and exclusion detailed previously, the testimonies of Venezuelan adolescent activists also highlight powerful forms of resistance and healing nurtured through feminist and intercultural educational practices. While many schools failed to provide safe and supportive environments, some educators and administrators, though exceptional, played key roles in fostering inclusion. Andrea, for example, recounted how a xenophobic remark from a teacher was promptly addressed by a school administrator, resulting in a formal sanction. Similarly, Mika described the positive impact of a culturally sensitive teacher who organized an integration event, cultivating a sense of belonging among students. However, these efforts proved fragile: when the teacher was transferred, all such initiatives disappeared. This underscores how inclusive practices within schools often rely on individual commitments rather than institutional frameworks.

Beyond isolated school experiences, the most significant sources of empowerment and resistance emerged from feminist activist spaces. Testimonies consistently highlight the critical role of programs such as Chamas en Acción [Girls in Action] and the Escuela Política Feminista [Feminist Political School], developed

by Quinta Ola, which serve as vital platforms for adolescent girls to understand, name, and confront the violences they experience. These initiatives combine human rights education and feminist historical knowledge with emotional support, collective analysis, and strategies for adolescent-led political participation. For many, these spaces represent their first encounters with a language and community that affirms their experiences. As Rosalia reflects, “I cried at the first Chamas en Acción workshop because I needed to let out my emotions. I felt like I was in an environment where I was understood and supported.” Feminist activism thus functions as a site of critical consciousness and collective care, enabling girls to exercise their agency to resist gendered xenophobia in their everyday lives and denounce gender-based violence in their communities.

Activists consistently emphasized that gaining access to knowledge about human rights, feminism, and interculturality was transformative, shaping their understanding of structural violence and expanding their capacity for resistance. Libertad remarked, “In Venezuela, I couldn't have discovered my passion, my voice, or the causes I care about. Activism and support networks like NGOs and Quinta Ola are essential so that no one feels alone.” She explained that the context of repression in Venezuela did not offer the safety, spaces, tools, or networks to voice these concerns, even though she was already observing critically and taking mental note of what was happening around her. It was in Peru that she could give shape and meaning to those earlier experiences and connect them with the similar trajectories of her fellow activists. This sense of community is especially important given the exclusion and isolation they face in schools. Diana shared that feminist activism helped her recognize that the harassment she experienced was unjust: “Thanks to activism, I learned that what happened to me was not okay.” Laite added that activism provided her with tools to manage the depression she experienced due to school-based discrimination. Through these feminist programs, the adolescents developed critical frameworks and coping strategies that allowed them to navigate hostile environments while reaffirming their sense of self and dignity.

The testimonies also reveal that feminist activism equips adolescent girls with practical tools to respond to violence and discrimination, tools that extend beyond emotional support into the realm of rights-based advocacy. Through programs like Chamas en Acción and the Escuela Política Feminista, participants learn to document incidents, formulate complaints, and articulate their demands in public spaces. These capacities are

sustained by intergenerational and intercultural networks of feminist educators and mentors who provide accompaniment and model alternative modes of power, care, and collective leadership. Such environments are crucial for girls navigating the intersection of xenophobia, classism, and GBV, as they offer protection and enable long-term political engagement.

When asked to map their support networks, the activists rarely include teachers or classmates. Instead, their maps centered on feminist spaces and woman-led relationships—mothers, mentors, peers from activist programs—demonstrating the centrality of intergenerational, female-driven support systems. These networks provided emotional stability, critical reflection, and access to collective strategies for confronting exclusion both within and beyond schools. Feminist educators and mentors also described how these spaces offered healing processes for themselves. Many recognized parallels between their adolescent experiences and those of the girls they now accompany and saw activism as a pathway to transform pain into shared resistance. This reciprocal process of feminist solidarity reveals how pedagogies grounded in trust, horizontal dialogue, and political commitment can sustain collective strength in the face of systemic adversity.

Activists also described a sense of being no longer fully Venezuelan in the terms their parents and caregivers hold to, yet not recognized as Peruvian either. Rather than experiencing this only as loss, they claimed it as a distinct, diasporic sense of self, forged through their own migration experience and at times incorporating a sense of belonging in Peru. This resonates with Lugones's (2003) account of the in-between as a space where rigid, colonial categories of identity can be loosened and reworked. Affirming this self-definition, sometimes in tension with their caregivers' attachments, emerged as its own form of agency: the claim to name who they are on their own terms.

Activists emphasized the deeply therapeutic dimensions of feminist activism. Understanding gendered and racialized violence through a structural lens allowed them to contextualize their experiences, moving away from internalized guilt and isolation. Naming violence was experienced as a form of justice. Many described their involvement in activist spaces as moments of emotional release, where migration-related grief, fear, and disorientation could be expressed and held. This form of collective healing, rooted in feminist pedagogy, enabled them to transform past traumas into political clarity and renewed agency.

The experiences of these Venezuelan adolescent girls demonstrate how feminist, community-based education can interrupt cycles of violence and alienation. By creating spaces of belonging where their knowledge is valued and their identities affirmed, these initiatives provide crucial psychosocial support while enabling sustained political participation and social transformation. Their narratives demonstrate that feminist activism functions as a necessary mechanism of protection, empowerment, and epistemic justice for migrant girls navigating hostile environments.

6. Discussion: Coloniality, Schooling, and Migrant Girls' Resistance

The findings of this study affirm that Venezuelan adolescent girls in Peru confront GBV and xenophobic discrimination within school settings as part of a broader configuration of structural and institutional violence. Testimonies reveal that these girls navigate multiple layers of exclusion and vulnerability shaped by their gender, nationality, race, age, class, and sexual orientation. When seen through a decolonial feminist lens, these intersecting forms of violence are revealed as continuities of the coloniality of power that remain embedded in Peru's modern institutions. This lens illuminates how the logic of coloniality (Lugones 2010; Quijano 2000), marked by hierarchies of race, gender, and civilization, continues to shape how migrant girls are categorized, regulated, and excluded. Within schools, for example, this manifests in practices that pathologize difference, normalize racialized gender violence, and reproduce national identities that exclude migrant femininities as threatening or improper.

This perspective reveals how gendered, racialized, and class-based oppressions are historically produced, culturally legitimized, and systematically maintained through school practices, public discourses, and policy silences. It enables a critical interrogation of how colonial hierarchies, particularly those related to purity, civility, and national identity, continue to operate in and through educational settings, influencing how Venezuelan girls are perceived, treated, and positioned within the broader national imaginary.

Activists' observations about the discrimination and sexual violence experienced by Afro-Peruvian and Amazonian girls further underscore how gendered xenophobia is entangled with broader racial and class-based exclusions. The hypersexualization that Venezuelan girls describe echoes long-standing colonial tropes that have racialized and eroticized Amazonian and Indigenous women in Peru (De la Cadena 1992; Motta 2011). In

school settings specifically, sexual violence against Indigenous and rural girls, often perpetrated by teachers or school authorities, has been widely documented, as has the impunity that surrounds it (Ciriaco 2023; Lazo Landivar et al. 2017; Gonzales and Romero 2023). These acts of violence are often rendered invisible and unattended within the school system, reinforcing the reproduction of coloniality through education.

Although previous research has examined xenophobia and gender-based violence against Venezuelan women in Peru (e.g., Blouin and Zamora Gómez 2022; Pérez and Ugarte 2021), it has paid limited attention to the experiences of girls and adolescents in school settings. This article directly addresses that gap by offering context-specific, age-sensitive insights into how Venezuelan adolescent girls experience and respond to intersecting forms of xenophobia and gender-based violence within Peruvian educational institutions. By analyzing their testimonies, the study provides new empirical evidence on the impacts of institutional discrimination and the emotional labor demanded by strategies such as “masking,” academic over-performance, and self-silencing—practices shaped by structural inequalities and fear of retaliation. These findings are crucial for informing more responsive school-based interventions, adolescent-focused policy advocacy, and rights-based educational programming.

In addition, this article contributes to feminist and decolonial debates by affirming adolescent girls as political and epistemic subjects. Their testimonies demonstrate how young migrants resist structural violence through both activism and everyday acts of agency, resilience, and solidarity. By centering their voices, the research challenges adult-centric and victimizing portrayals of migrant girls and highlights the importance of participatory methodologies in generating knowledge for social justice. Understanding and amplifying these experiences is essential for designing educational practices and public policies that are inclusive and transformative.

One of the key conceptual contributions of this study lies in demonstrating how schools function as both spaces of learning and arenas where the hierarchies of coloniality are reproduced (Quijano 2000). Through practices such as body policing, hypersexualization, and erasure of migrant identities, school actors actively participate in the normalization of violence. While these findings align with Segato's (2003, 2018) analysis of patriarchal power, her framework shifts the focus from an instrumental view of violence to one that is expressive and communicative, structured along a double axis of interlocution.

Applying her framework (2003, 2014, 2018) to the educational environment reveals that harassment transcends merely interpersonal conflict; it constitutes a performative message delivered on a horizontal axis, where aggressors—coerced by the mandate of masculinity—exact a 'tribute' of submission from the highly vulnerable body of the migrant girl to secure recognition and alignment within their dominant peer group. Furthermore, schools as state apparatuses reproduce a specifically modern-colonial patriarchy of high intensity, a binarizing machine that treats the migrant girl as a radical 'anomaly' that must be disciplined or expunged to fit a universalized national mold. This operates through what Segato terms 'moral violence'—the invisible mortar of everyday routines that, by ignoring or trivializing the migrant girl's suffering, effectively renders her invisible while denying her the status of a valid interlocutor. This 'nullifying' and 'foreclosing' force socializes subjects into the pedagogies of cruelty, training the broader school community to numb their empathy and treat living vital subjects as disposable things. Seen in this light, the everyday violence Venezuelan girls experience in Peruvian schools constitutes a contemporary expression of the coloniality of power and gender, continually reinscribed through the high-intensity patriarchal order of education.

The study also underscores the critical role of feminist, intergenerational, and intercultural networks in enabling resistance. Rather than being peripheral to formal education, activist spaces such as Chamas en Acción constitute alternative pedagogical sites that actively embody Segato's (2018) concept of *contra-pedagogías de la crueldad* (counter-pedagogies of cruelty). In a context where formal school environments often socialize subjects into a modern-colonial pedagogy of cruelty—which desensitizes communities and reduces the subalternized migrant girl to a disposable object—these activist networks dismantle such forces by cultivating the “proyecto histórico de los vínculos” (historical project of ties) (Segato, 2018: 964). By fostering intergenerational and intercultural dialogues between Peruvian and Venezuelan adolescent girls, these spaces collectively deprivatize individual suffering, transforming isolated pain into a shared feminist critique that transcends geopolitical borders. Crucially, these networks function through what Segato (2018: 67) terms a “*politicidad en clave femenina*” (politics in a feminine key)—a practice centered on proximity, bodily closeness, and a deep-seated relational and spatial rooting. Consequently, the local feminist network acts as a vital territorial anchor and an affective refuge against the precarity of migration and xenophobic

exclusion, while simultaneously empowering these adolescent girls to become themselves agents of reciprocity, sustaining and guiding others who navigate the same hostile structures.

The implications for public policy are significant. First, educational institutions must move beyond punitive and individualistic approaches to violence prevention. Instead, they must adopt intersectional frameworks that address the systemic roots of GBV and xenophobia. This includes revising teacher training programs to incorporate feminist and decolonial pedagogies; ensuring access to safe, adolescent-friendly reporting mechanisms; and embedding intercultural and human rights education across the curriculum. Policies must also recognize adolescent girls as political subjects and knowledge producers. Their participation in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of educational strategies is essential to ensure that interventions are contextually grounded and genuinely transformative.

Finally, this study reaffirms that producing knowledge with and from adolescent girls is an act of epistemic and social justice. Feminist activist research is a political commitment that situates knowledge within specific territories and histories: research on GBV and gendered xenophobia in schools must be grounded in how these oppressions have historically taken shape locally and how feminist and women's movements have resisted them. In Peru, sexual and physical violence, hypersexualization, and racial discrimination in schools are not new; they have been denounced for decades by Indigenous and Afro-Peruvian feminist activists and organizations whose knowledge has often been marginalized in academic discourse and public policy. Chirapaq (2021), an Indigenous women-led organization, documents the sexual violence faced by Indigenous girls, noting that reporting tends to decline when the alleged perpetrator is a teacher or school director, while Ashanti Perú (2014) works to make visible the discrimination affecting Afro-descendant women. By amplifying the voices and resistance strategies of Venezuelan migrant girls, this study aligns with these struggles and contributes to dismantling educational injustices and imagining feminist, intercultural, and decolonial futures rooted in intergenerational and territorial praxis.

7. Conclusion: Adolescent Girls as Political Actors and Knowledge Producers

This article has explored how Venezuelan adolescent girls in Peru experience and resist GBV and gendered

xenophobic discrimination in school settings through a feminist decolonial lens. Their testimonies reveal how violence operates as a continuum of exclusionary practices embedded in educational institutions, daily interactions, and public discourse. By foregrounding their lived experiences, the research illustrates the emotional toll of “masking,” the pressure to overperform, and the silencing imposed by racialized and sexualized stereotypes within schools acting as high-intensity, modern-colonial patriarchal apparatuses. Yet, it also shows how girls mobilize feminist consciousness, community support, and cultural strategies to resist these oppressions, reframing themselves as vital political actors.

These insights contribute to feminist and decolonial theory by expanding the understanding of GBV and xenophobia as intersecting systems rooted in enduring colonial hierarchies, sustained by heteropatriarchal and classist norms, and reinforced within institutional practices. They also challenge dominant academic and policy narratives that often render adolescent girls invisible or voiceless. Through participatory research methods, this study affirms the importance of treating adolescent girls as epistemic agents and knowledge producers. Working from their own experience, these young activists generated much of the analytical vocabulary that anchors this study: the distinction between a “clean” and a “dirty” Venezuelan, which exposes how racialization operates through nationality; the practice of “masking”, which names the daily labor of concealing accent and identity; and a shared sense of being “in-between” national belongings, neither fully Venezuelan in their caregivers' terms nor recognized as Peruvian.

These girl-authored concepts are themselves evidence of the epistemic agency this study seeks to recognize. Moreover, their engagement in activist networks functions through a *politicidad en clave femenina*, dismantling the school's pedagogies of cruelty by cultivating a *proyecto histórico de los vínculos*. Consequently, these spaces collectively de-privatize individual suffering, transforming isolated pain into a shared feminist critique while empowering these adolescent girls to become themselves agents of reciprocity. This calls attention to the urgent need for educational reform grounded in feminist, intercultural, and rights-based pedagogies capable of dismantling systemic cruelties to protect and empower migrant and racialized youth.

Ultimately, producing knowledge with and from adolescent girls is more than an academic exercise; it is an ethical and political act of epistemic justice. In contexts marked by systemic neglect and normalized violence,

research that centers the voices, resistance, and proposals of girls helps to disrupt power hierarchies and advance social change. The struggles of Venezuelan adolescents in Peru resonate with the broader historical demands of Indigenous, Afro-Peruvian, and feminist movements to transform educational systems into spaces of dignity, inclusion, and justice. Feminist activist research stands as a vital tool in this struggle, offering rigorous analysis, grounded alliances, and concrete strategies for structural transformation toward a future where migrant girls are heard, respected, and protected.

8. Ethical Standards

This article draws partially on data and analysis from the author's Master's thesis, *Resistencia Interseccional: Education, Feminism, and the Fight Against Xenophobia and GBV in Schools Among Venezuelan Adolescent Girls in Peru*, submitted as part of the MA Education, Gender and International Development program at University College London in September 2024. All content has been substantially revised, restructured, and expanded to meet the standards of this working paper and to contribute new insights to the academic debate.

Note

1. While Latin American decolonial thought has critiqued the Eurocentric framing of human rights, this study employs them not as a universalizing discourse but as a situated, intercultural tool that the adolescents themselves reclaim from their own experience. From this standpoint, and in a context where the language of rights is increasingly contested, human rights remain a necessary instrument through which these girls can claim protection.

Bibliography

- Alcázar, Lorena, and María Balarín. 2020. La inclusión educativa de NNA migrantes venezolanos en el Perú: una política que no se puede nombrar [Documento de Análisis PFIM, 2]. Lima: Equilibrium CenDE.
- Alcázar, Lorena, and María Balarín. 2021. El derecho a estudiar: Inclusión de niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes venezolanos al sistema educativo peruano. Lima: UNICEF Perú; GRADE.
- Amnesty International. 2022. Unprotected: Gender-Based Violence Against Venezuelan Refugee Women in Colombia and Peru. London: Amnesty International.
- Ashanti Perú. 2014. Afroperuanas: Situación y marco legal de protección de sus derechos.
- Barragán-Gamba, Damaris. 2015. "La violencia contra las mujeres es cuestión de género." In: *Criterio Libre Jurídico* 12(2): 79–90.
- Bartels, Susan A., Luissa Vahedi, Sofia Friesen, Monica Noriega, Belen Rodriguez, Maria Marisol Garcia, Julianna M. Deutscher, M. Sofia Luna-Siachoque, Sydney Johnson, Maegan McConnell, Bradley P. Stoner, and Eva Purkey. 2023. "Comparing Migration Experiences of Venezuelan Women and Girls: A Mixed-Method, Cross-Sectional Analysis of Refugees/Migrants in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil." In: *BMJ Public Health* 1(1): e000027.
- Berganza Setién, Isabel, and Ximena Solórzano Salleres. 2019. Límites y retos del Estado: Procesos de integración de la comunidad venezolana en Perú (1st ed.). Lima: Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.
- Biglia, Barbara. 2007. "Desde la investigación-acción hacia la investigación activista feminista." In: José Romay Martínez (ed.): *Perspectivas y retrospectivas de la psicología social en los albores del siglo XXI*: 415–422. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva.
- Blouin, Cécile, and Zamora Gómez, Cristina. 2022. "Institutional and Social Xenophobia Towards Venezuelan Migrants in the Context of a Racialized Country: The Case of Peru." In: *Migration in South America: IMISCOE Regional Reader*: 169–189. Cham: Springer.
- Chirapaq. 2021. Sexual Violence Against Indigenous Girls and Young Women. Lima: Chirapaq, Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú.
- Ciriaco, Michael. 2023. "Cada seis días un profesor es denunciado por violación sexual ante la policía." *El Comercio*.
- Cortina, Adela. 2017. Aporofobia, el rechazo al pobre: Un desafío para la democracia. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Curiel, Ochy. 2007. "La crítica descolonial desde las prácticas políticas del feminismo antirracista." In: Ramón Grosfoguel; Laura Oso; Anastasia Christou (eds.): *Mujeres y globalización: perspectivas desde la disidencia*. 92-101. Madrid: Ediciones Akal.
- De la Cadena, Marisol. 1992. Las mujeres son más indias. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.
- Esipova, Neli, Julie Ray, and Anita Pugliese. 2020. "World Grows Less Accepting of Migrants." Gallup. September 23.
- Freier, Luisa Feline, and Andrea Kvietok. 2022. "Lives on the Move: Experiences of Exclusion, Vulnerability, and Resilience of Venezuelan Forced Migrants in Peru." In: Tamar Mayer; Trinh Tran (eds.): *Displacement, Belonging, and Migrant Agency in the Face of Power*: 92–105. London: Routledge.
- Gonzales, María Alejandra, and Rocío Romero. 2023. "Profesores acusados por abuso sexual no son separados de las aulas, solo rotan de colegios." *Salud con Lupa*.
- GTRM Perú. 2023. Análisis Conjunto de Necesidades para el RMRP 2024. R4V.

- Gutiérrez Rivera, Lirio, and Luisa Delgado Mejía. 2022. "Agency in Contexts of Violence and Crime: Coping Strategies of Women Community Leaders Vis-à-Vis Criminal Groups in Medellín, Colombia." In: *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development* 4(3): 3.
- Instituto de Opinión Pública (IOP). 2021. *Encuesta de Percepción sobre Población Venezolana en el Perú*. Lima: IDEHPUCP.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI). 2019. *Encuesta Nacional sobre Relaciones Sociales 2019: Resultados*. Lima: INEI.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI). 2022. *Condiciones de vida de la población venezolana que reside en el Perú: Resultados de la II ENPOVE 2022*. Lima: INEI.
- Lagarde, Marcela. 1996. "El género." In: *Género y feminismo: Desarrollo humano y democracia*: 13–38. Madrid: Horas y Horas.
- Lagarde, Marcela. 2009. "Pacto entre mujeres: Sororidad." In: *Aportes para el Debate*: 123–135.
- Lamas, Marta. 2013. *Feminismo: Transmisiones y retransmisiones*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Lamas, Marta. 2022. *Dimensiones de la diferencia: Género y política* (Gabriela Méndez Cota, ed.). Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Lazo Landívar, Rodrigo Javier, Ruth Llacsahuanga Salazar, and Erika Yolanda León Angulo. 2017. *Desenrollando la madeja de la impunidad: Rutas de acceso a la justicia en casos de violencia sexual contra niñas y adolescentes en zonas rurales y multiculturales de la provincia de Condorcanqui, Amazonas*. Lima: Ministerio de Educación del Perú.
- Lugones, María. [2003] 2021. *Peregrinajes: Teorizar una coalición contra múltiples opresiones*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo.
- Lugones, María. 2010. "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." In: *Hypatia* 25(4): 742–759.
- Martínez Portugal, Tania. 2020. "Haciendo frente a las epistemologías heteropatriarcales: Elementos teórico-metodológicos para un análisis feminista de la violencia contra las mujeres." In: *Investigaciones Feministas* 11(2): 333–342.
- Motta, Angélica. 2011. "La 'charapa ardiente' y la hipersexualización de las mujeres amazónicas en el Perú: perspectivas de mujeres locales." In: *Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad: Revista Latinoamericana* (9): 29–60.
- Oxfam International. 2019. *Yes, But Not Here*. Oxford: Oxfam International.
- Pérez, Leda M. 2023. "'I Did Not Choose to Be in Your Country': Social-Racial Hierarchies in Peru and Venezuelan Migrant Women's Responses." In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*.
- Pérez, Leda M., and Luisa Feline Freier. 2023. "Of Prostitutes and Thieves: The Hyper-Sexualisation and Criminalisation of Venezuelan Migrant Women in Peru." In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49(3): 715–733.
- Pérez, Leda M., and Daniela Ugarte. 2021. "Venezuelan Women in Peru: At the Borders of Nationality, Gender, and Survival Migration." In: *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 22(4): 1313–1327.
- Plan International. 2021. *Niñas venezolanas: Voces de la migración. Estudio en Colombia, Ecuador y Perú*.
- Plan International Deutschland. 2022. *Estudio sobre violencia basada en género hacia las mujeres migrantes y/o refugiadas en los países receptores de Perú y Ecuador*. Plan International América Latina.
- Potts, Alina, Hattie Kolli, and Lea Fattal. 2022. "Whose Voices Matter? Using Participatory, Feminist and Anthropological Approaches to Centre Power and Positionality in Research on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies." In: *Global Public Health* 17(10): 2530–2546.

- Quijano, Aníbal. 2000. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." In: *Nepantla: Views from South* 1(3): 533–580.
- Raising Voices, and Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI). 2020. *Learning Together: A Guide for Feminist Practice in Violence Against Women and Girls Research Collaborations*. Kampala and Pretoria: Raising Voices; SVRI.
- Renkens, José, Els Rommes, and Maria van den Muijsenbergh. 2022. "Refugees' Agency: On Resistance, Resilience, and Resources." In: *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19(2): 806.
- Risquez, Ronna. 2021. *El Estado peruano falla en la atención a mujeres venezolanas sobrevivientes de violencia de género*. Amnistía Internacional.
- Save the Children. 2022. *Niñez migrante y educación: Acceso y permanencia de niñas, niños y adolescentes venezolanos en Lima y La Libertad*. Lima: Save the Children en Perú.
- Segato, Rita Laura. 2003. *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia: ensayos sobre género entre la antropología, el psicoanálisis y los derechos humanos*. Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.
- Segato, Rita Laura. 2014. *Las nuevas formas de la guerra y el cuerpo de las mujeres*. Puebla: Pez en el Árbol.
- Segato, Rita Laura. 2018. *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- The Global Women's Institute. 2020. *Empowered Aid: Participatory Action Research Workshop Facilitation Guide*. Washington, DC: The Global Women's Institute at The George Washington University.
- UN Migration (International Organization for Migration). 2022. *Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis*.
- UNICEF Perú. 2021. *Los chicos nuevos del barrio*. Lima: UNICEF Perú.
- Vargas Martínez, Flor Carina, and Alejandra Araiza Díaz. 2021. "Acción política frente a la violencia feminicida en México: Experiencias de una investigación activista feminista." In: *Empiria: Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales* (50): 91–114.
- VeneKlasen, Lisa, and Valerie Miller. 2002. *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*. Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing.
- World Bank. 2019a. *Venezuelan Migration: The 4,500-Kilometer Gap Between Desperation and Opportunity*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank. 2019b. *Una oportunidad para todos: Los migrantes y refugiados venezolanos y el desarrollo del Perú*. Lima: World Bank.



Commentary

Schools, Belonging, and the Politics of Agency

A Commentary on the Article “Venezuelan Adolescent Girls Confronting Gender-Based Violence and Gendered Xenophobia in Peruvian Schools” by Karol Gianina Marquez Olivera

Alina Potts¹

¹ The Global Women's Institute at the George Washington University, USA; apotts@gwu.edu

 0000-0002-3787-3679

One of the most compelling contributions of Marquez Olivera's article is that it refuses to flatten Venezuelan adolescent girls into either victims of violence or symbols of resilience. Instead, through Feminist Activist Research (FAR), girls emerge as political actors, knowledge producers, and authors of their own concepts for understanding violence and belonging. In doing so, the article demonstrates how participatory research can generate forms of knowledge that would remain invisible through more conventional approaches.

This commitment to seeing adolescent girls in the fullness of their lives is particularly important. Adolescents often fall between programs designed for children and those designed for adult women, leaving their distinct experiences overlooked. Marquez Olivera instead adopts an assets-based perspective, recognizing girls not only as individuals experiencing intersecting forms of violence, but as people with agency, relationships, aspirations, and collective strategies for change. By engaging Venezuelan adolescent girl activists, as well as Venezuelan mothers and Peruvian feminist educators, the research moves naturally across socio-ecological levels (Heise 1998), illustrating that experiences of violence and resistance are produced through interactions among individuals, families, schools, and communities.

The article is equally powerful in how it conceptualizes schools. Schools appear simultaneously as places of protection and harm, reproducing colonial, patriarchal, and gendered norms while also holding the potential to interrupt them. Importantly, Marquez Olivera reminds us that institutions are ultimately experienced through people. By including teachers in the research and highlighting the actions of individual teachers and administrators in the findings, Marquez Olivera reveals

how educators can profoundly shape girls' experiences of safety and belonging. Yet the findings also expose the fragility of relying on individual champions. When supportive teachers leave, the practices they nurtured often disappear with them. This observation raises an important implementation question extending beyond this study: how can educational systems institutionalize inclusive practices, so they endure beyond individual commitment?

The article also invites us to think differently about what it means to become a “migrant.” Just as the article understands gender as socially constructed rather than biologically fixed, it also illustrates how “the migrant” is socially produced through relations of power. Human mobility is a longstanding feature of human societies, yet who becomes labelled a “migrant” — rather than, for example, an “expatriate” — is shaped by racialization, nationality, class, and other unequal social relations. Marquez Olivera demonstrates how nationality, accent, dress, and class become markers through which migrant girls are positioned within enduring colonial hierarchies, illustrating that the category of “the migrant” acquires meaning through systems of power rather than movement alone.

Particularly compelling are the girls' own descriptions of living between identities. They describe themselves as no longer fully Venezuelan, yet not Peruvian either, transforming what might otherwise be framed as loss into a source of identity and strength. This insight is mirrored methodologically throughout the study. Through participatory workshops, collective mapping, and what Marquez Olivera describes as “girl-authored concepts,” the girls do more than describe their worlds. Together, they co-create spaces of belonging while developing a

shared language to name their experiences, build collective understanding, and support collective action.

The article concludes with recommendations for educational reform that foreground adolescent girls as active participants in shaping school environments. These are important recommendations, but the findings also suggest a broader lesson. Because schools are themselves institutions that reproduce dominant social norms, they may struggle to create space for forms of agency that challenge those very norms. This makes the feminist “third spaces” described throughout the article — for example, Quinta Ola and its Chamas en Acción and Escuela Política Feminista programs — not merely complementary to formal educational settings, but essential. These spaces enable girls to build collective identities, develop critical consciousness, and cultivate the confidence to challenge exclusion both within schools and beyond them.

Bibliography

Heise, Lori L. 1998. "Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework." *Violence Against Women*, 4(3), 262–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004003002>