ECHOES OF TRANSNATIONAL TEACHERS

by

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DEDICATION

My life stories are mingled with emotions and the aromatic scents which paint fragrant photographs in my mind. These bouquets bring back memories like the fresh smell of baby powder on my newborn sons, fresh baked yeast rolls and apple pie on my mother’s butcher block, or even the flowery perfume worn by my grandmother. Like these scents, I can still smell the warm Swiss Mocha of the coffee steam as it tickled my nose and the slight, fresh scent of mint growing in the wooden flower pot at the corner of the porch. Swaying on the old porch swing of my childhood home my mother and I shared a thousand stories. Accompanied by memories, I celebrate those very special moments and stories of my life.

I dedicate this dissertation to my sons Mitch, Brent, and Trevor who still listen to my stories, are the true love stories of my life, and will tell my stories.

I love you.
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The pathways we live each tell a story. My pathway to this work has been long and winding. Along the way God has put before me challenges and inspirations. The destined relationships he has given to me on the journey have awakened my spirit and given me moments to cherish for a lifetime. He has given me strength in times of trouble and stillness in times when I needed to listen to his voice.

I am thankful he has given me family that have loved me without condition and encouraged my pursuits throughout my life. To the strong women in my family your voices continue to whisper in my ear. My boys, I smile because of you. Love without hesitations and be true to your word. To each of you I say, reach for your dreams in this one short life you are given. Know that beyond the rugged mountains of hard work is the peaceful flow of the river of accomplishment which will melodically lull you in your golden years to the sweet tune of contentment for a life lived well and with purpose.

I am thankful for the many friends throughout my life who have brought me great joy. Many friends have remained throughout the years and to those who were only with me for a season you are not forgotten. For colleagues and friends I’ve met through the PhD journey I thank you for sharing the stories of your lives, your hopes and dreams, your families, and your deepest thoughts. Thank you all for the hours of critical conversations and debates over the last few years that have broadened my mind and deepened my convictions.
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ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this qualitative study was to uncover and examine through narrative inquiry the cultural fronts experienced and navigated by transnational teachers. Five transnational teachers from Spain participated in the research. Teachers shared their lived experiences through narratives captured in pláticas and photo narratives. Pláticas included early life experiences and personal education in their homelands. Teachers also shared their individual recruitment, interview processes, and transitional experiences to the United States. Finally, teachers discussed the organizational dynamics and experiences as educators in a new culture.

Participants grew in cultural consciousness and critical meaning making through composing, recomposing, and sharing their stories with one another. During a culminating cultural fronts retreat participants shared dialogue that illuminated the shared experiences that challenged and inspired them as new transnational teachers.

Analysis of the written and photo narratives provided insight to the critical cultural fronts faced by transnational teachers and provided the foundation for determination of recommendations concerning: a. Transnational relocation as it relates to family, teaching, and cultural challenges, b. Orientation, training, and professional to support for transnational teachers, c. Negotiate their cultural identities, and d. Practices and Policies that impact transnational teacher experiences.
Keywords: transnational teachers, cultural fronts, qualitative methodology, bricolage, pláticas
I. DISRUPTING THE NORMAL: SOME TRANSNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to discover, examine, and make meaning of the experiences of transnational teachers as they navigate cultural fronts while teaching in public schools in the United States (Gonzalez, 1997). Most of my early memories and learning experiences embraced the idea of discovering new places and people although I couldn’t name the experiences at the time as cultural. It would take literally a lifetime of experiences and reflection for me to embrace the concepts of cultural fronts and the dynamic impact these fronts have had and continue to have on my life and the lives of others.

Growing up I spent sunny summer days reading, my naturally bronzed feet dangling in the warm water, on the weathered wooden pier of our pond. The willow trees occasionally swayed in the seldom, but welcomed, breeze of the hot Texas days. I envisioned traveling to the distant places I read about in books. The stories of these exotic cultures intrigued me. I wanted to experience these cultures for myself. I wanted to hear the stories about their history, understand their rituals and symbols. During these brief uninterrupted moments on the pier, I imagined traveling the world as a missionary, nurse, or photojournalist capturing the stories of each new person and culture I encountered. My curious nature wanted to experience the places in this world that were unfamiliar to me as a teenager living on the dusty back roads of east Texas (Freire, 1970).

Personal Awakening and Disruption

My journey to these experiences would take many roads and almost 35 years from the days of imagining on the pier to actually boarding my first transnational flight (Dunn,
I recalled, as I sat waiting in the busy airport, dreaming of this moment. I arrived in this space because I was given the opportunity to travel to Chile as part of a research team. I was nervous to accept because I had never traveled out of the county other than for brief day visits across the Mexican border. Even then the experiences were not altogether transnational as I never ventured beyond border towns. On the flight I scanned the itinerary for the trip to Chile. Although the purpose of the trip was educational research there was also time for touring the capital city, local vineyards, and the coast of Chile. I imagined, as the internet sites had described, the city of Santiago as a thriving modern metropolitan city, rich in architecture, nestled in the foothills of the Andes and surrounded by vineyards. I could not wait to experience the history, art, culture and exchange ideas with educators from Chile.

As I stepped off of the plane after almost ten hours of restful sleep and excited tossing and turning in the airplane seat, my entire life changed. In one moment I was a member of the dominant social culture holding the keys of knowledge and language and the next I was standing in a line surrounded by Chilean nationals and research partners of whom only a few spoke Spanish. Standing in the line with my passport in my hand I realized that I was vulnerable in this new land so much so that they could even reject my entrance into the country. In that moment I felt alone and powerless. I was no longer literate or fluent in the dominant national language. I could not read any signs or understand even the simplest of phrases. As I made my way through the passport lines I was literally afraid to be separated by those in my group who spoke Spanish and as Chilean passport agents spoke to me I searched frantically for anyone who could understand their questions or a Chilean national that could speak English.
Our team of researchers was picked up by our research partners and we began our drive into the city. Within the van I felt the duality of comfort and disruption. On the one hand I was among colleagues and was at ease with the familiar. I had only to look out of the windows of the van to be cognizant of the disruption of my familiar space. The city was the bustling metropolitan area I had imagined but in my vision I had not imagined the emotionally safe and unsafe boundaries I was experiencing. Within the van I felt safe and the culture was known and natural but beyond those immediate surroundings was a world of billboards, roadway signs, and other evidence of an unknown culture that made me feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

On the quaint backstreets of Santiago several of us on the research team had rented a home-away apartment. Arriving at the apartment our first venture into the city was to a local market to buy food for the week. Walking to the market, only a couple of blocks away, I began to anticipate that the experience was to be more adventurous that I had imagined. The simple task of shopping for groceries was difficult based on my anxiety and confusion regarding common Chilean versus American practices.

I was unable to read grocery labels and challenged by purchasing products with unfamiliar currency. Additionally, common grocery practices in the US such as refrigerated eggs and produce, and packaging bread were not the norm in Chile. This made even the most familiar task complicated by simple differences in culture practices between Chile and the United States. Over the next few days I experienced the Chilean community through an awakened critical lens (Alberts, 2008). Our second story balcony looked out over the local streets. The diversity of the city was depicted in the scenic views from the balcony. A glance to the right and to the streets below revealed quiet
sidewalks lined with cafes and art shops popular to locals and tourists. After a relaxing night of listening to music swell to the upper rooms of our apartment we were awakened each morning by political demonstrations. Looking to the left from our balcony impassioned protestors lined the nearby streets. Surrounded by military police equipped with guns, batons, masks, and teargas the protestor’s rhythmic chants, whistles and drums echoed throughout the city all throughout the day.

Tourists and even most local residents don’t drive within the city of Santiago. While there we used taxi service and the more common subway system to get around in the city. The most fearful of all of my Chilean experiences was riding the subway. The subways were very crowded and of course all information was in Spanish making it impossible for me to easily maneuver without the aid of my research partners. Multiple times a day I felt anxious about missing an exit and having to spend hours trying to find assistance or my way back to our apartment.

While in Santiago our research included an educational summit to discuss educational practices with Chilean national educators. I remember feeling less anxious about this summit as I was assured that translation equipment was to be employed throughout the meeting. Arriving in the forum educators began to enter and although a few of the Chilean educators spoke English I was uncomfortable with my own inability to communicate using even common phrases. During the actual forum we did utilize the translation system but I wanted desperately to converse during the breaks. I wanted to build community and speak to the educators on a personal level. I desperately wanted to participate in the common culture and build relationships with the Chilean educators but I was unable to do so without the power of common language.
During the research we also surveyed the Biblioteca de Santiago. Due to the nature of the surveys we divided into teams of two researchers. Each interview team had one person that spoke fluent Spanish and would serve as the main interviewer. The other researcher was present to record and take notes regarding participant comments, body language, and descriptions of the surroundings during the survey event. Although I enjoyed the process it was very frustrating to write down a description of a participant crying or laughing and not know why the reaction was occurring because I couldn’t understand the language. In a few cases the participant even spoke broken English but when truly reacting to the survey questions they would revert to Spanish to deeply describe how they felt and therefore I would miss the meaning of the conversation and was unable to develop a deeper interpretation of the culture (Geertz, 1973).

Another day our team journeyed to the coastal sea sprayed city of Valparaiso to visit a local high school hosting a student congress. Home of Pablo Neruda, world famous poet, the city rises from the ocean to the foothills and is charmed by its many steep streets and stairways throughout the city. The inner city streets are lined with buildings covered in street art symbolizing local culture and history of their national politics (Lull, 1998). As we traveled to local schools I thought these sites would provide a familiarity in relation to school organizational structures I assumed that the organizational structure and school cultures would be similar to those in the US but that would prove to be untrue. Walking through the campuses and visiting with students I knew that even as an experienced educator in America I would find it difficult to teach in this country. While school structures were similar, school routines were very different. The student congress was inspiring as I watched student’s clearly articulate educational and political goals.
Even this experience made me realize that the historical political experiences within this country’s recent history drove the teaching and education of students. In order to teach in this country I would have to understand recent economics, national political events, and the influence these situations had on education and the people of Chile. For the first time I have been awakened by the cultural fronts before me and I was aware of my own transnational cultural reality (González, 1987).

**Professional Mural**

My first steps upon this road to exploring the cultural fronts of transnational teachers, teachers educated in their country of origin but teaching in the United States on temporary visas, began when in the role as a school leader, early in my educational career, I struggled to have representation from all parts of the community participate in our parent teacher organizational meetings. When I met with community members from the underrepresented areas, they expressed feeling uncomfortable in the forum. Language barriers, structure of meetings, and their experiences of either not being heard or not being comfortable to speak were often cited as reasons for non-attendance (Freire, 2008).

In response, our campus agreed to have community meetings in addition to the regular meetings so that parents could remain informed. The communities, although eager to be involved, were often hesitant to allow school personnel into their homes and community organizations. Careful consideration was put into jointly selecting school personnel that would attend neighborhood parent meetings. After an extensive period of meeting in the communities, we slowly began to have neighborhood parent representatives participate in the formal parent teacher organizational meetings and
eventually leading to teams of neighborhood parents attending formal parent teacher meetings.

A few years later while working in another district, one of my duties as a director of instructional training included overseeing the adult education night program. A program I thought would be providing opportunities for adults to secure their GED’s quickly turned into a multicultural experience. In any given cohort of adults we averaged fourteen different language, and nationalities.

I remember greeting newcomers at the beginning of each course. Their faces reflected different emotions such as fear, confusion, frustration, and excitement. I recall the difficult process of simply taking roll. The adult students couldn’t understand English and we had no interpreters for so many languages. Often the students would simply bring me their photo ID’s instead of trying to communicate their names and addresses.

As frustrating as the language barriers were, in just a few short weeks communication became easier and relationships were forged between staff and the adult students. At the end of each night the adults were encouraged to have a friend or family member come as an interpreter and they would bring traditional meals from their countries of origin and pictures to share. It was during these times that they began to express how difficult the transition was to the United States. In addition to the obvious language barriers they talked about not having family or community that shared their cultures. The students found it difficult to navigate simple tasks such as acquiring housing, buying groceries, and filling out job applications although many of the adult students had college degrees from their countries of origin. One woman in particular had a doctorate degree and I recall a tearful conversation one evening with her about how
discouraged she was that she could not find work and didn’t know how to secure proper housing for her family. During the years of working with these adults, although I could not yet see the path clearly, I began to develop an empathy and understanding of the experiences of transnational immigration simply through experiencing their stories (Sipitanou & Foukidou, 2012).

**Teacher Transitions**

After several more years I secured a leadership position over secondary education and one of the challenges facing the district was the state assessment scores in science at the local high school. Hiring highly qualified high school science teachers had been difficult for this district and therefore the district had begun to hire transnational teachers (Alberts, 2008). Approximately half of the high school teaching staff were certified transnational teachers. Over a two year period of working with the high school staff of transnational teachers I experienced a number of issues related both to their professional and personal experiences of teaching within the United States.

**Community Incongruence**

The transnational teachers, in varying degrees, experienced personal cultural challenges. The transnational teachers found the local community culture incongruent with their personal culture and would often travel to larger cities each weekend to make cultural connections with communities sharing their cultural backgrounds (Anzaldúa, 1987). For example, there were not any cultural market places in which to shop. Often the transnational teachers felt more comfortable worshiping in spaces more congruent to the personal cultural experiences and participating in rituals more similar to their foreign
cultures. Teachers expressed just enjoying visiting an international community where they could speak their native language.

**Socio-Cultural Impact**

One group of transnational teachers experienced great challenges adjusting in their first few months in the community. They arrived the day before school was actually scheduled to begin only to find their recruiting sponsor had failed to show up at the airport. The district immediately sent school personnel to pick up the teachers and drive them the two hours back to the community. Arriving at nearly midnight to their two bedroom apartment which was to be shared by four teachers, they found the apartment locked and no management on the premises.

After a couple of hours locating off site management and locating the key to the apartment they were alarmed to find that there had been no arrangements made for utilities. The apartment in fact was completely empty. These teachers began their first day with the students the next day after sleeping on the floor. One teacher described this experience as frightening and feeling disillusioned by her first experiences in the United States.

Logistics were also difficult for the teachers because none of the teachers had access to a vehicle. So, for the first few weeks they depended on rides from other staff members or walked the few blocks to the campus. Because of not knowing anyone in the community and very few teachers in the school, the first several months were, as they expressed “extremely difficult.” The district and other staff members helped with the transition, but the experience was so difficult that by mid-term a couple of the staff members, wanted to return to their home country. Shortly after my experience with these
staff of transnational teachers, national attention was focused on transnational teachers and their experiences teaching in the United States.

**Impact on Instruction**

The high school teachers were highly qualified, extremely competent in their subject content, and motivated experienced professionals but the cultural differences affected their success as classroom teachers and their desire to continue teaching in the United States. Student failure rates were extremely high among these teachers and when discussing possible causes the teachers stated “the students here aren’t motivated to learn” or “students misbehave and are disrespectful, they don’t act like this in my country” (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). The teachers also complained that the work load and extra duties assigned to teachers’ were extremely heavy and that they were exhausted at the end of each day. These stressful experiences also led to a high rate burnout and transnational teachers leaving the district before contract completion (Coulter & Abney, 2009).

**Theorizing Personal and Professional Experiences**

Three years ago I found myself immersed in theory and epistemology as a member of the Texas State University doctoral program. I was reflecting on my life experiences and in the process truly defining myself for the first time. I described this process in my autoethnography (Denzin, 2003) by interpreting myself as a puzzle, constructing my identity through conscious reflection of my life experiences. In the process I began to look at myself as a bricoleur having the unique opportunity to incorporate multiple perspectives and experiences in order to critique and construct meaning of transnational teaching experiences (Levi-Strauss, 1966).
The Fulbright research experience designed to gather information on Chilean adult learning and educational practices had unfolded for me a glimpse into the experiences of people entering new cultures. I now recall how others had experienced cultural fronts in my presence without me even being aware of the true challenges they had experienced. As a result of the culmination of the aforementioned personal and professional experiences I feel this positions me as a researcher and leader with certain insights and empathies for the experiences of transnational teachers experiencing cultural fronts (González, 1997).

Was this what the adult students had felt as they held out their ID’s to me those first nights of class? I had understood so little about their experiences. I thought back to the challenges those transnational teachers in the high school science department faced. I was struggling to make it through seven days in this unfamiliar land with supports of friends and colleagues. I imagined what it must have been like for them to enter a country alone without support knowing that they were contracted for an extended period of time and wanting to succeed as a transnational teacher (Alberts, 2008).

These insights have promoted me to explore the narratives of transnational teachers in order to illuminate their experiences, make meaning of their experiences, document occurrences facing the cultural fronts, and shed light on how transnational teachers navigate these cultural borders (González, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Currently in education teacher shortages, high rates of educator turnover, and a desire for global education have created a surge in the United States recruiting foreign teachers to become transnational teachers. According to the American Federation of
Teachers there is insufficient data related to transnational teacher recruitment, hiring, job placement, and effectiveness in the classroom (AFT, 2009).

Additionally there have been legal issues arising across the nation in regards to social justice issues, and the documented marginalization of certain groups (Toppa, 2009) of transnational teachers (AFT, 2009). Finally, mounting literature indicates that foreign certified teachers often face insurmountable personal and professional cultural challenges that Ladson-Billings (2001) suggest lead to ineffective instruction and lower student achievement. These challenges faced by transnational teachers often lead to the same educational effects that caused us to reach beyond our borders to prevent. Gilliom (2003) defines the effects as teacher turnover, teacher shortages, and failure of the educational system to adequately prepare students in global classrooms led by highly qualified teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study will be to describe the lived experiences through storytelling of narratives of five transnational teachers as they navigate cultural fronts during their journeys to teach in American public schools (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). This research will contribute to the literature by exploring the emerging salient issues and cultural forces identified in the narratives that uniquely affect transnational teachers (González, 1997). Additionally, this study will inform the educational community as to how transnational teachers navigate cultural challenges which affect both their personal and professional experiences (González, 1997). The study will seek to describe best practices identified by research participants as positively
impacting their challenges in order to create more effective practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Research Questions

This research is a qualitative study, presented in a written and visual narrative inquiry design. This design seeks to illuminate the lived experience of five transnational teachers as they begin teaching in the United States (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). Utilizing a bricolage of narrative inquiry methods including *pláticas* to capture oral narratives, visual narratives, and researcher field notes the research was guided by the following four research questions:

1. How do transnational teachers experience their relocation as it relates to family, teaching, and cultural challenges?
2. What orientation training and professional development training is in place to support transnational teachers teaching in the United States?
3. How do transnational teachers negotiate their cultural identities?
4. What practices and policies emerge as having an impact on transnational teacher experiences both positively and negatively?

Theoretical Framework

The study is framed by critical cultural theory, organizational culture, and the concept of cultural fronts. This study frames the qualitative methodology with a critical theoretical lens to formulate knowledge of personal experiences and organizational culture. Critical Theory seeks not only to explain but to transform using social inquiry (Tyson, 2006). Using critical theory the research seeks to explain the wrong in the status quo or social reality in order to improve the experiences of transnational teachers. Critical
theory employs identification of underlying constructs such as values, attitudes and beliefs of the members and attempts to understand how these constructs serve to oppress (Freire, 2008). In 2009 the American Federation of Teachers issued a report called Importing Educators which highlighted alarming stories of human trafficking, servitude, unequal benefits, and cultural barriers experienced by some transnational teachers (AFT, 2009). Informed by a critical epistemology, this study seeks to employ critical theory as a means of inquiry based research to explain the experiences of transnational teachers recruited to teach in the United States.

Therefore the study sought to describe experiences as cultural entities meet at what González (1997) would refer to as a cultural front. González described cultural fronts as dynamic and multi-dimensional forces converging in a whirling vortex around cultural tensions that can occur across or between any societies. González defined this vortex of space and motion as occurring across three levels of relationships and conflicts: intro, inter, and trans-cultural fronts. He also indicated that a study of cultural fronts would necessarily consist of the investigation of four dimensions of analysis including: structure or social space, historical and social agents, situational factors such as time and event, and symbolic and descriptive information (Gonzalez, 1997). Framing the research in this manner allows multiple fronts to be identified and salient issues, or challenges, to be specifically identified for each type of front such as: personal-community, personal-personal, and personal- organizational.
Qualitative methodology is an exploratory inquiry of a social problem in order to understand how and why the problem is occurring (Creswell, 2003). The purpose of this qualitative research is to uncover the in-depth experiences of transnational teachers in order to create meaning of their lived reality, identify salient issues, and frame knowledge that could inform future educational practices in regards to transnational teachers (see Figure 1). The design allows transnational teachers to tell their stories through the vibrant expressive art of visual narrative inquiry which generates rich descriptive observables.
This allows the researcher to develop an understanding of the ontological representations of the stories (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010).

**Narrative Inquiry**

Although there are multiple definitions of the term narrative it is most often understood as story based on experiences and cultural discourse (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). Narratives are essentially life stories that give meanings to our lives by describing our social and cultural experiences (Chase, 2005).

Barthes (1966) states,

Narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories, and very often those stories are enjoyed by men of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds. Narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (p. 237)

More than the gathering of stories, narratives are our natural method of composing and recomposing our lives in order to make meaning of our experiences as interpretive storytellers (Currie, 1998; Josselson, 2006). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to this method of composing as searching, researching, and searching again.

Narrative inquiry is a result of our engaging in life and experiencing events throughout the course of our lives (Polkinghorne, 1995). This process is unique because as stories are woven storytellers are still living and reliving the experiences, their lives unfolding and their reflective interpretations over time dynamically affecting the retelling of their experiences (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Sarris, 1993). Polkinghorne (1995)
describes this as collecting knowledge from the past based on our stories but that the knowledge is not always about our past since the storytelling is recursive in nature. Polkinghorne (1995) noted that meaning constructed from moments in our lives was, itself, simply an understanding of a part of the whole life experience.

These moments or events give meaning as a result of their connectivity, as transitions in life are ongoing and fluid it is our retrospection that provides meaning (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Polkinghorne, 1995). Narrative inquiry is therefore a simultaneous exploration of three common places: temporality, sociality, and place. Stories within these commonplaces are shaped socially, culturally, institutionally, and linguistically and are therefore stories of people in relation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). The relational components are shaped by persons participating in the events and the tensions, gaps, and silences associated with the events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

Deleuze (2002), referenced this story development of people in relation when he said “we do not work together, we work between the two” (p.7) when speaking in regards to the significance that relations play in narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is not a singular work but built in relations not only with other story characters but other stories and storytellers including researchers (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013).

Therefore they incorporate critical reflexivity, or critical reflection, which in turn gives us a glimpse, through the telling and retelling, of a person’s identity. Atkinson (1990) describes how researchers “write down” stories and then “write up” these stories in a process of retelling (p. 61). Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to establish within their method of research an intimate relationship with the research partners. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), theorized the idea of narrative turn to expand traditional
research into developing research relationships which would lead to a deeper understanding of research participants through dialogue. Narrative turn along with the relatively new research practice of visual narrative enhances traditional research by creating research methods that add depth of understanding to the experiences being researched (Butler-Kisber, 2007; Vaikla-Poldma, 2003).

Visual Narrative Inquiry

As memory is selective and memories as well as meaning are composed of multiple realities so is narrative inquiry in the sense that it is composed of a desire to understand specific curiosities that frame the research. Visual narrative inquiry evokes memories through the incorporation of diverse forms of photography in order to compose life stories (Rose, 2001). The visual narrative, photography, establishes a historical representation of temporal, social, and place relevance in regards to the experience. Therefore, visual narratives provide for a carpe diem approach to understanding and reconstructing the event (Rose, 2001).

Visual images documenting events provide deeper insights and understanding by incorporating tacit, unwritten, depictions of life experiences as they occur. Although the pictures do not narrate or create meaning they do credibly capture a moment in time and a reality on which to base the construction of meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Bach (2001) suggests that photographs preserve the event as a metaphor of a person’s experience. According to Creswell (2003) qualitative research employing visual narrative inquiry therefore is a visual method of documenting life and naturally linking practice and critical analysis in order to transform experiences into knowledge (Friedman, 1997).
This research will merge visual ethnography and narrative inquiry methods so as to allow research partners creative and rich strategies for expression and representation of their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). In order to determine meaning, identify emerging themes, and obtain the essence of shared experiences *pláticas*, observations, and field notes were used (Creswell, 2003). Capturing anecdotal material with these two approaches I arrived at the essence of the lived and shared experiences of the transnational teachers in the study (Creswell, 2003).

**Underlying Assumptions**

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) state that, “Assumptions are so basic that, without them, the research problem itself could not exist” (p. 62). Within this qualitative study an ontological assumption can be made that multiple realities exist within the sample of transnational teachers. The participants had different experiences and views based on multiple factors such as recruiting organizations, location of teaching assignments, and teacher support structures within their organizations and communities. This study also understands that an axiological assumption exist and recognizes that participant values and biases are present which could contribute to participant interpretation. These assumptions were significant to the study considering the diversity of the transnational cultures that existed within the participant sample (Creswell, 2003).

**Organization of the Study**

This research is outlined in ten chapters. Chapter I provided an introduction indicating my selection of the research topic based on my lived personal and professional experiences. The chapter also outlined the research problem and purpose of the study. The research questions were identified and a conceptual framework explained prior to a
brief overview of the study design. Chapter II will review literature surrounding the concepts of transnational teachers, critical and organizational culture, cultural fronts, and visual narrative inquiry.

   Literature reviewed includes framed the research design and led to identification of the relevance of the research. Additionally, the chosen methodology and method selection is supported by literature. Chapter III explains the method used in the study as well as a detailed description of the research process, data collection, and analysis of data. This chapter also discussed the ethical considerations and limitations of the methods chosen for the research. Chapters IV through VIII follow with the narrative portraits gleaned through pláticas with each participant; a) Saint Genoveva, b) Papá Fausto, c) Pequita, d) Dulce Cierra, and e) Candaleria Susurro.. This chapter includes a summary of narratives included transcriptions, visual representations of the narratives, and visual artifacts.

   Chapter IX reports the identification and coding of emergent salient issues of transnational teachers and recurring themes in the shared cultural retreat. During the cultural retreat the participants presented their photo and written narratives. This chapter also discussed the process of making meaning and framing knowledge as experienced by the research partners. Furthermore, the chapter concludes with the inclusion of coding documents to indicate the process of analysis. Chapter X guides the study to a conclusion by framing the insights of the study as determined by the narrative study and discuss the implication for future research.
Summary

The study contributes rich data of personal experiences in order to further aid school leaders in understanding the diverse and interrelated macro and micro salient issues described by Roth, Kostova, and Dakhli (2011) as related to the experiences of transnational teachers. Thus, the research attempts provide a description of experiences that could lead to future studies and the development of dynamic policies, regulations, and supportive frameworks to enhance both the effectiveness and the experiences of transnationally recruited educators (American Federation of Teachers, 2009).

This study is vital to the field of education as we transition into a global education system. First, recruiting and hiring of transnational teachers is thought to be an effective way to staff classrooms across the United States as our nation sees a decline in teacher retention leading to an increase in teacher shortages. Currently there is limited data on the retention and effectiveness of transnational teachers (AFT, 2009). This qualitative study of five transnational teachers sought to explore teacher voice through personal narratives of the experiences and decisions to teach and continue teaching in the United States.

Furthermore the study was particularly important in bringing awareness to the documented social injustices currently being experienced by transnational teachers (AFT, 2009). Finally, the research hopes to determine, through analysis of data, connections of the experiences of transnational teachers that could guide educational leaders in the discussion and design of systemic supports and professional development to specifically address issues faced by transnational teachers both personally and professionally.

If the experiences of transnational teachers, for example, were to mirror the experiences of current teachers then the mantra for public education might shift from
importing teachers beyond our borders to improving teacher education and development of educational systems within our borders. Such educational improvement could serve to dually improve the experiences of transnational as well as national teachers.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“We import just about everything else-why not teaching talent as well”

(Wolff & Glaser, 1986).

The 2009 landmark American Federation of Teachers (AFT) report, Importing Educators: Causes and Consequences of transnational Teacher Recruitment, cites teacher shortages, high rates of educator turnover, and the continuing desire of America to globalize education as possible reasons for the relatively new surge of importation of transnational teachers. Beyond the hopes of globalized education the United States new mantra is hiring highly qualified educators to bring about transformational public education. Although research regarding transnational and overseas qualified teachers is scarce it is vital that educational leaders understand the cultural and professional challenges that face transnational teachers in K-12 schools (AFT, 2009). In order to effect positive change with this new phenomenon of transnational recruiting education leaders must also examine the socio-economic, political, and personal forces that facilitate teacher migration and retention in U.S. schools (Barber, 2003; Michael, 2006).

This qualitative study will focus on the critical narratives of transnational educators and their experiences navigating cultural fronts during the process of transitioning to the United States. My research is informed by, and elaborates upon, four theoretical threads of the literature: a) cultural fronts, b) critical cultural theory, c) life-world systems, and d) organizational theory (Freire, 1970; Habermas, 1962; Lull, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2000). For this reason I have embraced the conceptual intertextuality of theoretical bricolage to construct a more rigorous and rich methods model (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).
Transnationalism

One has only to view the history of Ellis Island to know that the United States of America is founded on the immigration of people from around the world (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). Vice President Al Gore in a speech in 1994 stated “out of one, many” and “You all share the American belief that there is strength in all our differences that we can build a collective civic space large enough for all our separate identities” (Barone, 2001, p.1). Even as these words were spoken the view of immigration in America remained monocultural expecting assimilation and Americanization of people immigrating to America (Barone, 2001). The concept of globalization as explained by Altbach and Knight (2007), has taken on a new understanding of connectivity of people from around the world:

Globalization is the context of economic and academic trends that are part of the reality of the 21st century. Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even—individuals—to cope with the global academic environment...Globalization may be unalterable but internationalization involves many choices. (pp. 290-201)

The understanding of global education therefore is vital to educational policymakers as this 21 century reality is driving the increase of transnational teachers crossing international borders to teach. Transnationalism literally refers to the crossing of these national borders (González, 1997). It is within this space of cultural crossing that the research seeks to explore the results of cultural shock, diffusion, and hybridization as two societies with different cultures come into contact and navigate both the tensions and opportunities of creating new cultural knowledge (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009).
Transnational Education

Although a relatively new mantra of 21st century educational emphasis has been on hiring transnational teachers in order to advance global education (Holland, 2012). However, the hiring of transnational teachers is not new, but has in fact been a quietly emerging practice for more than a quarter century (Holland, 2012). As early as post World War I global education has been seen as an agent of cultural transmission promoting global societies (Bu, 2003). Most early cultural exchange programs were focused on students and teachers in colleges and universities after the implementations of the Fulbright Act of 1946 and the Mundt Act of 1948 (Holland, 2012). These acts allowed for major political events and advancements in the development of cultural exchange programs after the 1980’s and the end of the Cold War (Holland, 2012; Quigley, 1997).

In 1978, Gilliom and Ramy suggested that attitudes, beliefs and values about their own country as well as other countries were developed in children as early as intermediate school (Gilliom, 2003). National identity studies such as theirs led to the expansion of cultural exchange programs to include public schools (Gilliom, 2003). The intent of the cultural exchange programs shifted to include cultural awareness in PreK-12 students by opening the doors to a new vision of global education by hiring transnational teachers in public school in the United States. The understanding among educators was “Teachers with transnational experiences make connections across cultures and civilizations and across global issues instead of teaching them separately” (Rapoport, 2006, p. 2).
As interest in global education was rising teacher shortages were also on the rise. The AFT currently estimates that 200,000 teachers need to be hired each year in the US alone, and at the international level, UNESCO estimates that 18 million new teachers are needed by 2015 (AFT, 2009). Transnational recruiting has brought about an explosion of recruiting companies eager to bring in teachers from all across the globe to fill difficult to fill public school classrooms (Holland, 2012). National statistics report that 9.3% of public school teachers leave education before the end of their first year and up to 50% by their fifth year of service (Eggen, 2001; Rosenow, 2005). Helen Ladd in a comparative study of educational policies in developed countries found that low salaries compared to other nations, teacher preparation, and working conditions in the United States were causal factors in teacher attrition (Ladd, 2007). As the teacher shortage crisis, decreases in teacher retention rates, and school reform began to percolate the focus on transnational educators as the solution emerged as the answer to flattening the marketplace, increasing globalization, and improving schools through hiring transnational teachers to fill classrooms (Friedman, 2005; Holland, 2012).

Unwilling or unable to address the root causes of growing teacher shortages, public school systems around the country have begun importing teachers to meet their staffing needs (AFT, 2009). The literature studies on teaching abroad are limited but examine potential benefits of exchanges while exploring the factors that impede sustainability (Craddock & Harf, 2004; Emert, 2008). For example in a qualitative study of teachers in the UK it was found that 69% of those responding indicated that they would return to their home country (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). A causal comparative study of national and transnational teachers using the Burnout Test Form 1 concluded that
transnational teachers had greater job satisfaction than their counterparts teaching in their country of origin (Coulter & Abney, 2009). A critical analysis of transnational educators within the cited works also provides a glimpse of the professional and personal challenges encountered during their experiences as teachers in foreign countries (Carter & Keller, 2009).

**Educator Exchange and Visa’s**

When foreign teaching opportunities first began the term of the transnational work exchange was usually a period of six weeks to one year and often associated with an academic institution (Holland, 2012). Today there are two main ways to become eligible for a foreign teacher position in the United States (AFT, 2009). The H-1B work visa allows foreigners with specialty occupations and educational credentials permission to work in the United States for a period of three years. This visa is renewable once and then the immigrant is required to return to their country of origin for one year before becoming eligible to apply for another visa (AFT, 2009). A second form of visa is the J-1 exchange visa which is a one-year twice renewable visa with a two year home country residency requirement prior to reapplication (AFT, 2009). There was a 30 to 50% increase in visas from 2002 through 2007. Limitations exist in the AFT report since data only reports new and renewed visas, so currently the research is inadequate to examine either the occupations or stability of these skilled workers. Therefore, research is not always available to determine where educators are located within the United States, from which countries they originate, and demographic information regarding how long they stay in the United States or if they acquire permanent residency (AFT, 2009).
Barber’s report on national recruitment trends estimated that there were 15,000 transnational educators in the US in 2002-2003 and that 10,000 of them were employed in large urban districts (2003). These hard-to-staff urban classrooms bring their own challenges and are often identified as “persistently dangerous” schools (AFT, 2009). In the AFT report transnational teachers stated that they were not prepared for the differences in students in these inner-city classrooms as compared to their native country, “Here the students are very direct, very bold,”; “They’re loud,”; and “They’re intimidating” unlike students from their native countries who they see as respectful in the classroom (AFT, 2009, p. 72).

Transnational teachers shared that even though they came to the teaching assignments with open minds and anticipated differences, they were surprised and had concerns about excessive paperwork, accountability, testing, and additional administrative responsibilities assigned beyond the duties of the classroom teaching expectations (Alberts, 2008). In a study of Asian pre-service teachers conclusions were made that expectations of teaching and the actual day-to-day reality was a significant barrier for transnational educators (Spooner-Lane, Tangen, & Campbell, 2009).

What is known is that transnational recruiting is popular and does seem to, at least temporarily, allow districts the ability to place teachers into hard to fill classrooms. As hard to fill urban and rural classrooms become harder to fill and local and state fiscal agencies tighten their budgets the need for transnational educators is soaring (Holland, 2012). Recruitment viewed from both the macro and micro political framework is both interesting and alarming due to limited studies of the effectiveness and long term stability of hiring transnational educators (AFT, 2009).
Push Pull Factors

Transnational educators experience push factors in their own undeveloped countries such as; low wages, poor working conditions, and political instability. Recruiters offer enticing pull factors such as higher wages, better working conditions, social, economic, and political stability. These migration “push” and “pull” factors make transnational teacher recruitment a profitable enterprise for the nearly forty recruiting agencies throughout the United States (Holland, 2012).

The recruiting incentives are also often misrepresented or inflated leading to potential marginalization and exploitation (Bowie, 2010). This misrepresentation by recruiters could also lead to a constant cyclical pattern of temporary placement and lack of stability for transnational educator placement (AFT, 2009).

Cultural Fronts

When people enter societies differing from their own they often express feeling distress and confusion. This experience is most often termed culture shock and is common in the first few months of immersion into a new or foreign culture (Fee, 2010). Every culture has its own values and beliefs embedded in its social parameters. As transnational teachers migrate to new social spaces the point at which the two cultures converge has been identified at what González coined in 1982 as a “cultural front” (González, 1997).

Although there is limited empirical research, studies have followed the recruitment of transnational educators and documented their experiences (Barber, 2003). Spanish teachers in South Carolina public schools were researched in 2002 and three years later, Hutchinson, followed with studies of transnational teachers, himself included,
in private schools in the southern United States (Finney, 2002; Hutchinson, 2005). These narrative studies explored transnational teacher transition and the overall experiences of participants before and after transition into American schools (Finney, 2002; Hutchinson, 2005). Experiences often shared by transnational teachers are the influences of cultural diversity, culture shock, and the difficulty in assimilation into academic and local communities (Albaum, 2011; Fee, 2010). In a qualitative study of Urban Education, transnational teachers discussed the difficulties of teaching within a new culture (Dunn, 2011). Dunn’s qualitative study was based on interviews and observations of four Indian teachers in a southeastern urban school district recruited on J-1 visas (2011). Research themes emerged and included: challenges with student behaviors, culture shock, communication difficulties, new pedagogy, and lack of cultural awareness (Dunn, 2011). Administrators interviewed in the study expressed concerns with the continuation of transnational recruitment because they had limited success with transnational teachers and felt the teachers were unprepared for the cultural and pedagogical differences (Dunn, 2011).

Givens and Bennet (2004) found that teachers experienced racism that alienated and made them feel isolated within the school culture (Spooner-Land, Tangen, & Campbell, 2009). Charlesworth (2008) identified that as a result of newly evolving cultures creates the need for new ways of teaching diverse populations. Transnational teachers in the American Federation of Teachers Report described this diversity.

Most importantly, there are different kids. You cannot even compare time; it is day here and night there. Dressing style is different; the way you speak and live is
different. The way you express yourself is different. Nothing is similar. (AFT, 2009, p. 19)

Roth, Kostova, and Dakhli define this as a cultural misfit, where individuals widely differ from their current cultural environment (2011). The greater the psychological distance between two countries including linguistics and historiography the greater the cultural misfit and adjustment for educators (Fletcher, 2007).

Understanding Culture

The term culture originates in ancient Rome and was later interpreted by Cicero, in his Tusculan Disputations, to mean cultivation of the soul (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). Later used in anthropology, Sir Edward Burnet Tylor, according to Spradley and McCurdy (2009), interpreted the term as the human capacity of a member of society. Tylor believed that culture was the complex formal knowledge of societies’ beliefs, values, laws and customs (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). According to Konzulin, Glindis, Agevey, & Miller (2003) a child's cultural development emerges initially at the social level and later in the individual level.

Clyde Kluckholm described culture, in his book Mirror for Man, as a total way of life, acquisition of a social legacy, a way of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving. Culture, as he defined it, is a standardized norm of socially learned behavior (1959). During his ethnographic research of the Navajo for a period of thirty-seven years Kluckholm related cross-cultural communication in five aspects of human life; intrinsic human nature, man nature relationship, time and tradition, becoming or inner personal development, and collective or social relations (Kluckholm, 1959).
Culture as defined in this research is the communication and interactions that make sense of shared knowledge and ultimately lead to the ability to interpret experiences and generate behaviors (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). Strong cultures have three key components: cultural knowledge, cultural artifacts, and cultural behaviors. Cultures also develop complex communication networks that carry explicit culture, knowledge people can talk about, through dialogue, stories, myths, and legends (Spradley & McCurdy, 2009).

**Tacit Culture & Behaviors**

Tacit culture, a concept pioneered by Edward Hall, is cultural knowledge that is without linguistic expressions and can only be conveyed through artifacts and observation of the culture. Hall noted this in his studies of middle-class North Americans and their cultural behavior expressed in four levels of interpersonal space (Marsumoto, 2001; Spradley & McCurdy, 2009). Culture principally is guided by relationships among people. Cultures have learned patterns of interactions which can be identified as ideal behavior which is behaving how we think we should behave, actual of reality behavior, and believed behavior which is what we think we are doing. Culture is in essence a system of behavior that is re-storied and passed down through the generations within a society (Marsumoto, 2001). Cultural behaviors include gestures, gaze, interpersonal space as previously mentioned, and other non-verbal behaviors that express emotion. The research on gazes for example goes back to David Efron’s study of Jewish immigrants to New York City and more recently Fehr and Exline’s research on power in 1987 (Marsumoto, 2001). Collective research of Tomkins, Ekman, and Carroll in their classis
“universality study” of expressions provides evidence that facial expressions appear to be universal across multiple nationalities (Marsumoto, 2001).

**Cultural Artifacts**

An artifact is defined as something given shape by man and historically represents a culture. The term represents both archeological and social artifacts. An artifact represents a culture and gives information about the culture that may not otherwise be translated through oral language (Lull, 2007). Stories and language are verbal artifacts represented and demonstrated by behaviors during rituals and ceremonies (Lull, 1998). Artifacts and symbols are used to create knowledge of social, personal, and collective identities (Lull, 1998).

**Storytelling Pláticas**

Pláticas allow storytelling and retelling critical to understanding self and defining purpose and agency through sharing (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010). This study embraced the use of pláticas in order to create safe spaces for participants to tell their stories (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). These intimate spaces allow the researcher to develop trusting relationships with participants and participants to develop relationships with one another (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). Pláticas were used to collect individual narratives and then incorporated during the public cultural retreat where participants collectively shared their multiple experiences in order to promote critical consciousness (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Waite, Nelson, & Guajardo, 2007). Sharing experiences and exposure to the collective stories is a powerful tool for analysis of cultural tensions and co-construction of knowledge (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013).
Cultural Identity & Reflexivity

Bourdieu's concept of culturalism contends that although people have the learned cultural they retain the ability to create new reality (Bourdieu, 1972). Bourdieu also believed that an individuals’ habitus is socially constructed by exposure to people living and working in the same environments and therefore different than their individual identity. Given this belief Bourdieu suggested that individuals are unique in their development of cultural identity and consciousness based upon the ability to reconstruct their identities reflective of their environment and social experiences throughout their lives (Bourdieu, 1984)

Lull (1998) discusses the study by Gonzalez of Mexican society from the perspective of culture in the mid-seventies employing Bourdieu’s lens of hegemony and habitus. Realizing in the data analysis that there were methodological gaps in the study he began looking at boundary zones and borderlands where the cultural tensions were originating.

Borderlands

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), in her seminal work, Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza, defined borderlands as vague spaces, safe and unsafe, created by the emotional remains of an unnatural boundary. Borderlands are those unintentional, multicultural spaces where cultures meet, where those living on the edges discover similar shared beliefs and rituals and are able to construct new ones (Anzaldúa, 1987). In these borderlands, multiple cultural identities are invented (Anzaldúa, 1987). Elenes (1997) discusses how Anzaldúa’s concept of borderlands perspective seeks to examine and understand the social conditions of societies and peoples experiencing mixed cultural
identities. Life in these margins, on the border, is a cultural fusion creating a third space (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Hunter (1991) went so far as to call these points of cultural divergence cultural wars based on common differences in hegemony within societies. Regardless of the origin of two converging cultures the impact of the cultural fronts creates tension, inspiration, and opportunity for transformative policy. The multi-dimensional aspects of a cultural front are created by the unique historical and symbolic ontologies of the two converging cultures. In addition, the cultural front is in constant flux in nature due to relationships, tensions, and salient issues represented along the cultural boundaries. Not unlike the meteorological metaphor of a weather front the nature of a cultural front is always dynamic and created by roles and social locations of all human beings and the multiple layers of interpretations of self, contexts, and social actors involved in rigorous research (Hunter, 1991).

González (1997) recognized that cultural fronts were transclass and not exclusive to any society where knowledge about the life and world were co-constructed by societies with multicultural identities (Gonzalez, 1997). Cultural fronts can occur across and convergence of social exchange whether personal, community, or organizational.

**Cultural Consciousness**

The stages of acculturation according to Fee (2010) are identified as; a) honeymoon period, b) period of confusion and misinterpretation, c) awareness of difference and anger, d) recognition or positive and negative cultural elements, and e) bicultural navigation stage. Fee (2010) conducted interviews with 31 bilingual immigrant
guest teachers and determined that the teachers were challenged in both personal and professional cultures and described learning the foreign culture overwhelming.

Cultural critical consciousness and self-reflection is needed in order for transnational educators to understand not only their own cultures but the cultural diversity of other societal groups and enable them to articulate their own cultural identities (Freire, 1970; Waite, Nelson, & Guajardo, 2007). Reflexivity is an act that leads people to reflect in order to understand a deeper meaning of self. The reflection consists of looking back at past experiences related to social spaces and the influence of people on those experiences. Reflexivity requires that a person actively analyze the events and behaviors occurring during the experience in order to be critically self-conscious and inform meaning making of the experience (Urban, 2001).

Critical consciousness is often problematic because culture can be so inherent that often members of society have never considered their own personal cultural identities. People often times don’t understand the process of self-reflection leading to cultural awareness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Without this introspection, or reflexivity, it is not possible for critical or continuous cultural reconstruction (Alberts, 2008; Dunn, 2011). Critical consciousness also requires cultural empathy in order to understand cultural differences from a different perspective (Dunn, 2011).

**Critical Cultural Theory**

In the spirit of critical theory this study seeks to understand the research participants within personal historical, cultural, and social frameworks. Critical theory seeks to identify the unequal relations of society primarily around socio-cultural structures and ideally resolve the oppressed dichotomies through social consciousness
and dialogue. The central tenets of critical theory seek to go beyond deep description and analysis and develop a framework for what could be (Freire, 2005).

Critical researchers recognize that although people can choose to change their social circumstances they must be cognizant of their cultural reality before they can move forward into a more complex multicultural interpretation of reality. To become conscious they must first socially critique their own experiences in order to make sense of the restrictive and alienating conditions that exist in the status quo of their life world. Critical ethnography, often referred to as critical theory in action, focuses on the interpretation of personal experiences, oppositions, conflicts and contradictions through narratives and subsequent dialogue (Freire, 2005). Critical theory in action seeks to be emancipatory by identifying the causes of challenges, alienation and domination and thus allowing the participant to become critically conscious of their personal situation and opportunities for creating change. This consciousness, or reflexivity, of personal values and beliefs is an essential element of self-reflection and recurring transformation (Freire, 2005). Critical theory therefore identifies "life problems of definite and particular social agents who may be individuals, groups, or classes that are oppressed by, and alienated from social processes they maintain or create but do not control" (Freire, 1970, p. 27).

Critical and Organization Theory both use communication to excavate the underlying values and assumptions that guide both life worlds and system worlds. Critical theorists moreover examine interpersonal communication that promotes common practice and balance in organizations and societies. These theoretical lenses also look at the inner workings of society and organizations to reveal contradictions associated with the imbalance of power which can result in hegemony based on observance to socially
constructed norms and values developed by members as they structure their environments (Habermas, 1962). Critical perspectives acknowledge that knowledge is not objective and is tainted by societal interest and structures of power and seek alongside organizational theorists to engage social members in conscious identity and active participation (Freire, 1970). Critical interpretivism explores organizational culture through the shared meanings and power struggles created that ultimately affects the way people and groups interact with each other within a society or organization (Freire, 2005).

**Life-World Systems**

Jurgen Habermas constructed the sophisticated theory of life-world systems (Habermas, 1962). Impacted by Mead and Durkheim who contributed to social theory by their explorations of social interaction and collective representation Habermas conceived society as a system of actions. In complex systems theory culture is transmitted through discourse of shared cultural knowledge which impacts three life-world spheres: culture, society, and personality (Habermas, 1962). His studies centered around life-world systems related to colonization patterns which distort and uncouple systems to the point that systems no longer represent societal values instead of existing for the sake of the people (Habermas, 1962). His theory advocates structures of intersubjectivity and occurs in deinstitutionalized communicative action (Habermas, 1962). Mutuality, as he suggests, is this symbiotic relationship of life and systems worlds which ultimately creates human capital in organizations (Habermas, 1962).

Although he has been criticized for his views on modern systems the fact remains that often systems are foreign to day-to-day life-world systems when a culture of communication and shared creation of knowledge is not practiced. Habermas (1962)
suggests that even legitimate democracy can only be accomplished through strategic
discourse which leads to transformative action. Sergiovanni (2000) expands Habermas’
theory to encompass dimensions of leadership leading to empowered educational systems
through development of teacher capacity and local authority. He further defines effective
leadership as the ability to promote and protect societal cultures and values (Sergiovanni,
2000). At the core of Sergiovanni’s work with school leaders is the idea that school
transformation cannot occur without the symbiotic relationship of a life-world balanced
with systems-world (Sergiovanni, 2000).

George Moore suggested the significance of change as the ability of even a slight
change of habit as having the ability to alter our reality and therefore our interpretation of
the world that surrounds us causing us to lose our sense of permanency (Ladson-Billings,
2001). Transnational educators experience not slight but significant change of habit as
they enter schools in the United States and therefore must understand the dynamics of
organizational culture in order to successfully engage in the structure, procedures, and
policies of their new environments (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

**Organizational Culture**

Organizational theory is the sociological study of formal social organizations that
explores the interrelationship of members within the environment in which they operate.
Organizations can be looked upon as social units of people structured and managed in
pursuit of collective goals (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Organizational cultures, not unlike
societies, share collective values, beliefs, norms, working language, symbols, and habits
of organizational members as a result of history, product, market, employees,
management vision, and national cultures (Needle, 2004).
Collective behaviors and assumptions are unique to organizational members (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Although companies may have their own culture they may additionally have diverse and conflicting subcultures that co-exist due to the cultures inherently embedded in the organizational member identities (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Shein, 2004). In essence an organization has three layers of complex culture. The first layer is represented by the values, beliefs, and assumptions. The secondary layer is the communication culture which is constantly transformed through member interaction. Finally, the tertiary layer consists of the sub and counter cultures resulting from membership culture or covert management styles (Hofstede, 2001). Understanding this organizational framework is vital to interpreting organizational phenomena and its effect on human behavior (Shein, 2004).

In Hofstede’s (2001) study of 160,000 IBM employees in 50 different countries and three regions of the world, he claimed cultural differences existed across regions and nations, and that awareness of this multiculturalism was critical to the globalization of organizations. Hofstede associated the multiculturalism not only to regional families and societies but also any organizations, national political systems and legislation. Hofstede also identified dimensions of culture that would influence organizational behavior in predictable patterns.

Organizational cultures are profoundly entrenched in their regional and national respective cultures, and this can shape company vision, management, and relationships between management and employees (Geert, 1983; Hofstede, 2001). Cultural influences differ by regions, suggesting that organizational culture is significantly impacted by national culture (Denison, Haaland, & Goelzer, 2004). Sheins (2004) illuminates culture
in his organizational model that identifies three levels of observable culture. The primary level consists of observable and tangible artifacts that relay shared cultural meaning such as facilities, technology, member dress, slogans, and mission statements. The secondary level enlightens the observer to the shared values such as loyalty, basic beliefs, local and personal values, and assumptions deeply embedded in the culture of the organization (Shein, 2004). The third tacit level of culture is the deepest and identified by the interactions of members. This level is often a level of the organization which members are either not conscious about or there is an unspoken rule that outsider knowledge of this culture is taboo (Shein, 2004). Gaining access to this level requires acclimation over time and therefore is difficult to study and even more difficult to traverse (Shein, 2004).

Understanding the levels of organizations and tacit cultural norms could assist transnational educators in acclimating and navigating cultural differences in schools (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2000).

A recent empirical study of transnational cross-cultural management, Western and Chinese professionals, was conducted in China. The study found that three cognitive conditions leading to "cultural rules of behavior" existed in the organization (Zhang, 2009). Values, expectations, and ad hoc rules shaped organizational behaviors. The study also suggests that these conditions were not necessarily consistent acting as a “multi-carriage train” and therefore acted as “shock-absorbers” enabling individuals from different cultural backgrounds to cope with conflicts of cultural practice allowing what Zhang (2009) termed as emerging hybrid cultures in organizations. The concept of hybrid cultures, as suggested by Adkins and Caldwell (2004), could potentially lead to the
positive interactions of transnational educators with the overall culture of an organization and lead to job satisfaction and earlier acclimation into the institution.

Organizational structure also defines culture and behaviors of members and their ability to successfully navigate organizations (Lather, 2004). The Organizational Culture Inventory measures twelve behavioral norms and group organizations into three basic cultures (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000). Constructive cultures encouraged interaction among co-workers and often incorporate the team approach to accomplishing tasks. The characteristics of a constructive organization are high standards of excellence, self-actualization and fulfillment, humanistic, devoted to the development of employees, and value culture and relationships. Constructive cultural norms model empowerment, empathetic leadership, constant improvement, and learning organizations (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

In passive/defensive organizational cultures members think and behave in ways that they believe they should in order to be effective with people and will not threaten or jeopardize their own security. Passive/defensive cultural norms model behaviors of approval, conventional, dependence, and avoidance. Members are management pleasers and avoid conflict and interactions by relying on rules, procedures, and directives as opposed to personal values and judgments. Members of passive/defensive work related cultures are less motivated, have a higher tendency of turnover, and report unresolved conflict in their job dissatisfaction.

Aggressive/defensive cultures are characterized as task oriented as opposed to people centered. Aggressive/defensive cultural norms model opposition, power, competition, and perfectionism. Members of aggressive/defensive cultures tend to be
critical of other members. Since the norms award prestige and influence power and control of others often guides interactions. Members seek recognition and status constantly comparing their performance to other members. Due to these high standards driven to perfectionism, members often place excessive demands on their personal work as well as the work of others within the organization (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

Observing organizational culture assists in understanding patterns of behavior that occur in the workplace. Organizational culture not unlike societal culture is a learned culture. It is important to match personal culture to organizational culture but often this is not possible especially in instances of transnational employment. Organizational cultures are created, influenced, and developed over time through social interaction as an expressive form of cultural consciousness. For this reason it is critical that educators are culturally aware of their own cultural values and those of the organization (Freire, 2005). Additionally, since successful acclimation requires an extended period of time transnational educators recruited on temporary visas may find the process of navigating organizational cultural barriers difficult (Lull, 2007).

This study, guided by this literature review, examined transnational teachers experiencing cultural fronts by gathering historical information through narratives and incorporating historical review of current data. The research observed structural information through an understanding of community and organizational cultures. Symbolic analysis of the cultural front examined by the incorporation of visual narratives to include: art, artifacts, and authentic visual photography. To analyze the situational time and space of the experienced events the research conceptually framed the research as a
hybrid exploration of cultural occurring at a multi-dimensional cultural front (Lull, 2001).

With the rise of globalization the concept co-creating knowledge and hybrid cultures must be embraced (Sipitanou & Foukidou, 2002). Friedman (2005) suggested that our fate as a result of globalization could be altered but only if society chooses to embrace change and diversity. The acquisition of transnational teachers may be a part of the solution to the educational needs currently addressed in the US but salient issues related to cultural diversity and navigation of cultural fronts must be addressed in order to build the capacity of transnational educators and the institutions of education in which they teach (Lull, 2007). Currently there are nearly 19,000 transnational teachers, seeking to fulfill their vision of the land of opportunity in the United States and participate in a global teaching experience (AFT, 2009).
III. METHODS

The methodology examined the professional educational and personal experiences of five transnational educators who are employed in public schools in America as allowed by H1B visas. Visual Narrative Inquiry was used in this research to allow the researcher to examine details of the transnational educator experiences in order to provide insight into the cultural complexities that make this teaching experience unique (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This methodology, according to Denzin (2003) allows researchers to focus on individual experiences of interest and to glean information from the participants’ personal stories which are most valuable in creating meaning from the interpretation of the experiences among multiple study participants. Merriam (2009) suggested that research should consist of three general characteristics; a) the focus on particular events, b) in depth description of the events, and c) interpretive understanding of the readers. This research focused on collecting data on the personal and professional experiences of transnational teachers as they enter the United States and begin teaching in public schools. Using visual narratives which included photographs and stories of the participants, the research hoped to provide a rich descriptive data base of the lived experiences of the teachers in the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Geertz, (1973) suggested that the researcher become as a bricoleur allowing them through analysis and reporting of the rich descriptive critical ethnographies to involve readers Marshall and Rossman (1999) described this type of qualitative research as providing readers with firsthand experience of the events and allowing them to transfer meaning of the process into their own cultural dynamics. Connelly & Clandinin (2006) stated;
People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (p. 375)

Understanding that stories are the portals to life experiences visual narrative inquiry is the most appropriate method for examining transnational educator experiences in order to add valuable research to this area in the field of education. This chapter includes sections related to the research design, participant selection, the researchers’ position, data analysis process, and limitations of the study.

**Research Design**

The methodological design employed was qualitative in order to create a study that makes meaning of collective experiences of transnational educators navigating similar lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). The research explored the complexities of cultural consciousness, individual cultural identities, community cultures, organizational cultures, and the navigation of these cultures through the lived experiences of transnational teachers Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). As such this study was conceptualized using bricolage and employed methodological bricolage as the approach to inquiry (Kinchloe & Berry, 2004).
Methodological Bricolage

Bricolage, a French expression, signifies crafts-people who creatively construct new artifacts. Methodological bricolage allows examination of phenomena from multiple, diverse and often competing, methodological perspectives (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Levi-Strauss (1966), a cultural anthropologist, was the first to use the concept of “social bricolage” to examine social consciousness to solve problems as a collective society. The metaphorical concept of bricolage, employed by Levi-Strauss, examined the underlying structures that direct social meaning-making. He further explains, “intellectual bricolage” as making meaning of life-history by piecing together cultural artifacts, symbols, discourse, and social practices that give context and lead to construction of meaning. Methodological bricolage challenges the rationality, epistemological, and ontological assumptions that there are worldwide structures that exist autonomous of social context (Levi-Strauss, 1966). He also suggests that monological perceptions of the world unsuccessfully explain the complexity of social realities and through his empirical studies examined relational realities of societies (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Bricolage as conceptualized by Denzin and Lincoln (1999) and further theorized by Kincheloe (2001; 2004a; 2004b) and Berry (2004a; 2004b), is a multi-perspective, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to critical inquiry.

Denzin and Lincoln (1999) employed a bricolage approach to assist researchers in appreciating the complexity of meaning-making in a world of social contradictions and diversity. They proposed that multiple perspectives and observers within a study increased the richness and depth of narrative inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (1999) identified five types of bricoleurs: the interpretive bricoleur, the methodological
bricoleur, the theoretical bricoleur, the political bricoleur, and the narrative bricoleur.

Kincheloe (2002) further suggested that the understanding of each of these bricoleurs was necessary for the articulation and understanding of the critical bricolage. The concept of bricolage encourages researchers to search for numerous perspectives as opposed to unquestioned monological realities (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Examining beyond monological reality into complex relationships and social links that create knowledge recognizes the social, cultural, and psychological entities that influence impermanent reality (Kincheloe, 2004).

Levi-Strauss (1966) upheld that the concept of bricolage was conceived in an attempt to comprehend the complexity and volatility of reality. Berry (2004a) later suggested that multiple perspectives, analysis and critique would enlighten the interpretation of events. Kincheloe (2001) further supports a conception of research bricolage where diverse theoretical frameworks are melded together to broaden critical theoretical and pedagogical context by creating the groundwork for multi-methodological inquiry.

**Monological Research**

Kincheloe (2004a) suggests that monological research is inadequate for studying educational phenomena. He explains that critical hermeneutics explored as an interpretive process is powerful in constructing meaning of socio-cultural phenomena, texts, and subjects (Kincheloe, 2004a). He also criticizes that inquiry often conducted as monological research reinforces oppressive, marginalizing, and violent social structures. He further states that research should embrace study not as “thing-in-themselves,” but rather as connected objects-in-the world.” Kincheloe (2001) suggests that critical
theoretical research approaches should be emancipatory and expand rationalities.

**Polysemy and Thick Description**

Cultural inquiry therefore burdens the researcher to develop a thick description of the individuals and their cultures in order to understand the complexities of the research process. Geertz’s (1983) thick description approach has been used in multiple studies which include everything from historical France, cultural Indonesia, to subcultural studies in Atlanta, Georgia (Scarboro & Campbell, 1994; Vann, 2003). Cultural inquiry complicated by polysemy, or the multiple interpretation of words and signs, therefore a vivid thick description created by exploration of multiple theories and methods enlightens research inquiry in a socio-cultural context (Geertz, 1973).

Bricolage consequently allows diverse meaning to be contextualized at these intersecting contextual fields. As complex interactions occur multiple interpretations are examined and knowledge is co-created at these points of convergence (Kincheloe, 2001). The ontology of relationships and connections is inseparable and thus the research cannot abstract relationships from these intersecting zones of complexity and expect to make sense of their context (Kincheloe, 2001).

**Critical Bricolage**

As a critical cultural bricoleur conducting narrative inquiry I employed multiple theoretical frameworks in order to understand the complexity of cultural collision of entities convergent upon what Lull (1998) discusses as the concept of cultural fronts by Gonzalez, and what other brocoleurs might interpret as sociocultural zones of complexity. Without a culturally descriptive process as this to explore the dynamic collision points the research would struggle to make meaning of the phenomenon and tensions that stage
interpretations, practices and policies created as a result of transnational educator experiences. Maintaining, as did Levi-Strauss, that all interaction is relative the examination of this complex landscape based on ontological influences and relationships was the central focus of this socio-cultural research (Levi-Strauss, 1966).

By examining these dimensions the research seeks to embrace and enlighten the belief that "there is no one correct telling” rather, “each telling, like light hitting a crystal, reflects a different perspective on an incident" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999, p. 5). An interpretive bricoleur is therefore a researcher who: “Understands that research is an interactive process, shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting” (p. 6).

Denzin and Lincoln, acknowledged that knowledge must always be interpreted through multiple theoretical paradigms: “the theoretical bricoleur reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many interpretive paradigms” (1999, p. 7). Bricoleurs perform multiple readings on an artifact, text, or phenomenon. This process allows bricoleurs to understand the different theoretical contexts and showing the plurality of complexities that influence, as Kincheloe and Berry explain, the complexity of the lived world, subjective positioning or political interpretations (2004a). For Denzin and Lincoln narrative bricoleurs appreciate that inquiry is only a representation of research participants and therefore “objective reality can never be captured” (1999, p. 7).

Educational research, according to Kincheloe, employing multiple frameworks and methodologies empowers rigorous interpretation of socio-political and educational phenomena. Kincheloe posits that bricolage connecting ontology to multi-theoretical research creates a sophisticated understanding of the interrelated complexity of
participant positionality and the occurring phenomena thereby avoiding the reductionism created by monological research (Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).

Cultural bricolage explores personal phenomenological experiences across points of social divergent and how people navigate these points of convergence to create new cultural identities while still retaining the ontological identities. Critical bricoleurs attempt to remove knowledge production and its benefits from the control of elite groups and embrace the plurality of the complex dimensions of the cultural exchange inherent within these borders.

Kincheloe (2004) suggests that, critical bricoleurs must embrace narrative inquiry typically silenced in dominant research narratives. Further suggesting that critical inquiry must represent a worldview interpretation of phenomenon in order to make meaning and construct transformative practice. I thus sought to connect the interpretive thoughts of participants in regards to their lived world, or life world, in order to explain the research through enactivism which Manturama and Varela suggested would bring a new level to critical research (Kincheloe, 2001). Although often seen as incongruent these theoretical threads of literature provide upon examination, a coherent context.

Through the process of visual narrative inquiry this study examined the ontology and cultural capital of transnational educators. In the opening section I explored literature on the history of transnational education. In the second section I examined the literature regarding culture, cultural front and critical theory as it identifies the ontological influences on transnational educators and their reflective acquisition of critical consciousness (Sharplin, 2009). In the third section I looked at literature around the
premise life systems, world systems, and the impact of these systems on personal and professional (Habermas, 1962).

Specifically this literature focuses on understanding how culture, cultural identity, and cultural consciousness interconnect in order to navigate and co-create knowledge along cultural fronts (Habermas, 1962). This literary exploration of culture allowed the research, as it unfolded within the constructs of critical ethnography, to explore salient issues and intersubjective mutuality in regards to personal, organizational, and community cultural convergence of transnational educators acclimating to schools in the United States.

This approach allows the research to embrace multiple dimensions of inquiry in order to understand experiences and resulting social behaviors (Berry, 2004). Kellner (1999) suggested that the multiple design approach combined with plural perspectives and analyses could give deeper meaning to personal experiences. Levi-Strauss (1966) posited that methodology should examine not only dialogue but also encompass the study of rituals, social practices, and artifacts in order to consider pluralistic perspectives.

Narrative inquiry does not privilege one method of gathering data nor expect that one method of narrative research captured the entirety of life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). Therefore, this research employed methodological bricolage in its use of visual narrative inquiry incorporating both visual ethnography and narrative inquiry techniques of gathering data.

The examination of the experiences of transnational educators navigating cultural fronts was accomplished through the analysis of a collection of narratives and interviews supported by photography and created by each of the research partners in the format of a
digital storytelling cultural retreat (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010). This visual narrative
format encouraged participants to have personal agency within the research
representations (Kellner, 1999). Ethnography is not defined by the methods it employs to
gain data but rather the emergence of a cultural description or shared meaning of
individual experiences (Manen, 1990).

The format of the research also aided researchers in developing a thick description
of their cultures. The visual narratives gave a unique critical representation and
understanding of beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns of partners as they immigrate
into host societies (Ezzy, 2002). This research strives to enlighten the dynamic cultural
status quo and move toward a new reality of navigating cultural fronts (González, 1997).

The methods used in this study reflect principle tenets of proximity, intimacy,
trust, and envisioning as important components of creating relationships with research
partners (Creswell, 2003; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). According to Geertz (1973)
observables must be collected through multiple informant dialogue, mapping, authentic
observation, collection of artifacts, and reflective practice in order to develop rich thick
descriptions that enable making meaning of an event or pattern of events.

Geertz (1973) defined adequate thick description as having four center
parameters; a) interpretive cultural analysis, b) interpretive coding of social discourse, c)
extrovert expressions of culture, and d) contextual happening describe behaviors and
truth. Therefore, research partners were encouraged to creatively design their own
personal ethnographies supported by digital storytelling, creative art form, or rituals and
artifacts thus giving the participants an authentic voice and ability to delve into deep
descriptions of their experiences (Geertz, 1983).
Visual Narrative Inquiry

Unlike traditional methods of collecting observables visual narratives empower research participants to express their issues and concerns in a digital format which can consist of photography or videography. Visual narrative is valued as a method of collecting research observables because it enables people to record and reflect their lived experiences, incorporates critical dialogue and meaning making of similar or shared experiences through discussion of personal photography and narratives (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Following in the tradition of Freire, visual narrative is a method of developing critical consciousness through reflection of experiences, capturing stories through photography or videography, and culminating in shared meaning making through dialogue based on representations (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The digital representations not only depict participant experiences they also create a public record to highlight salient issues or concerns based on the experiences (Lykes, 2001).

Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) suggested that the addition of visual photography along with personal narratives creates more powerful stories by engaging readers through vivid representations. This level of community engagement leads to critical reflection and consciousness (Freire, 2005).

Research Partners

Through the process of snowball sampling the researcher compiled a list of informational rich transnational teachers who had been identified as cases of interest by colleagues and acquaintances. Over the period of a month the researcher sought to obtain five participants for the study. The researcher sent out a letter/email of introduction
which included a brief synopsis of the anticipated research project. The researcher created a list of interested and eligible participants and contacted them via phone to discuss the research in more detail and ask if they were interested met with them to discuss the research and possibility of participating. A face-to-face meeting was scheduled to discuss the details of the study and go over the consent form in order to expand on the project requirements, timelines and to attain the participants’ signature. If they were not interested, the researcher went back to the original list of eligible participants to identify the next participant and repeated the process.

Snowball or chain sampling was employed in the selection of research partners for this study (Creswell, 2003). Employing this type of sampling allowed the researcher to select participants with consideration for the dimensions of setting, the actors, place, and event which describe the experiences of research partners navigating cultural fronts.

Initial face-to-face meetings and phone conversations ascertained if the candidates met the outlined research partner criterion and exhibit interest in the outcome of the research. Criteria for participation included:

• Being from a country of origin outside of the United States
• Being foreign teacher educated in country of origin
• Being a transnational teacher employed in a public school in the United States
• Currently on H1B visa
• Newly recruited or within the first year of teaching in the United States

After this initial screening five research partners were invited to participate in the research. An additional five candidates were informed of their ability to join an online
forum to follow the research which allowed the research to continue if one of the selected research candidates dropped out of the research. Prior to the initiation of actual research consent was acquired from all adult participants. The consent clearly indicated that involvement in the research was voluntary.

Five transnational educators were selected from Spain which was their country of origin. Moreover, research partners were selected to develop a diverse sample based on placement within an urban school district. This delineation of sampling allows the researcher to examine the cultural issues of transnational educators across possible PreK-12 public schools. Furthermore, four of the partners were within the first year of transnational education experience in the United States and currently hold H1B visa status. The fifth teacher was selected based upon the emergence of the mentor concept within the transnational program and has been a transnational teacher and mentor for seven years. The transnational teachers were formally educated in their country of origin and had not have lived, been educated, or worked in the United States prior to their transnational employment.

The five participants were given pseudonyms for all documentation purposes within the research. Participants pseudonyms were; a) Saint Genoveva, b) Papá Fausto, c) Paquita, d) Dulce Cierra, and e) Candelaria Susurro. Documentation includes all observables: narratives, photographs, audio recordings, participant writings, field notes from observations will be kept separate from secured pseudonym information to protect the identities and confidentially of participants.
Researcher Positionality

In order to understand the wider cultural and social meaning of events a researcher must first understand their own cultural identity (Spindler & Spindler, 2000). First the research presented a constant and unique opportunity for my personal self-reflection and consciousness of my own personal cultural identity formation (Spindler & Spindler, 2000). This reflection allowed me to determine my own personal placement within the strataums of the cultural front context of the study. Additionally the study, grounded in deep dialogue, allowed me to develop a collaborative and trusting relationship with the research partners (Preissle & Grant, 1998). Finally, my intimate relationship with the participants and the interpretive analysis experience in the visual narrative retreat positioned me to be a conduit for authentic representation of their findings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). Understanding my own culture and my own positionality in regards to gender, culture, class, race, and educational experiences allowed me to take into account and experience the established inside/outside relationship with research partners during the course of research (Merriam, 2009).

Data Sources

This study involved multiple methods of collecting qualitative observables that allowed for rich dialogue and techniques which allowed research partners opportunities to create authentic visual and written narratives (Creswell, 2009). The researcher collected observables over a three month period while engaging in the process of written and visual narrative inquiry (see Figure 2).
**Figure 2. Method Techniques.**

**Method One: Pláticas “Storytelling”**

The research participants and researcher participated in a *plática* session in order for participants to share their stories (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008; Merriam, 1998). This storytelling session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted between January and March of 2015. Participants selected the location, time, and date of the *plática*. The *plática* sessions were digitally recorded and in addition the researcher took independent field notes (Merriam, 2009). Utilizing note-taking enabled the researcher to
capture body language and dialogic nuances occurring during the interviews and visual
narrative presentations (Merriam, 2009).

The non-structured design of the plática sessions allowed participants to share
additional experiences outside of the guiding questions (Creswell, 2009). Participant
recordings and researcher notes were transcribed and coded for analysis using
Reissman’s (2008) approaches. Reissman’s (2008) narrative analysis considers four
analytic approaches: thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis,
and visual analysis. Thematic analysis then categorizes accounts, stories, or descriptions
of events. A structural analysis considered how the narratives were structured including
temporality, sociality, and culture. Dialogic performance analysis focuses on the
difficulty in analyzing accounts that are co-constructed or performed. Dialogic
performance and visual analysis assisted in the researcher’s reflection of how the stories
were told and visually represented (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010).

Method Two: Visual Narrative Project & Cultural Retreat

Upon identification of research participants were asked to develop a creative
visual narrative using photography and storytelling. Participants were supplied with a
guide outlining the project as indicated below.

1. Visual narrative guide
2. Collecting photographs
3. Ongoing opportunity for group dialogue and reflection in an online forum
4. Photographic reflection questions
5. Developing summaries of photo stories
6. Cultural Retreat
During this initial plática meeting as the visual narrative project was outlined for participants there was a brief discussion about the responsibility of the research participant as photographers to ethically capture their experiences and any representations of their community (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Musello (1980) writes:

Meanings and interpretations are most often based on a belief in the photographs’ value as a document of natural events and on recognition of its iconic referents. The photographic allusion is increasingly expanded; however, as viewers interact with the natural events depicted and draw references and significances from a broad range of events, experiences, people, and responses which they recall, derive from, relate, and attribute to the depicted contents….The use of the home mode seems heavily reliant on verbal accompaniment for the transmission of personal significances. Photographs presented to others are typically embedded in a verbal context delineating what should be attended to, what significances are located in the image, and providing contextual data necessary for understanding them. (pg.76)

Visual narrative inquiry is grounded in the philosophy of Paulo Freire’s critical consciousness and community photography (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Digital and visual techniques offered through the method of visual narrative inquiry enabled research participant a way to identify and represent their transnational experiences with various photographic techniques (Wang & Burris, 1997).

As photographers the participants were also be cautioned that all photographic representations should have a logical connection to the research questions and themes of...
the study. The research partners were provided flexibility to develop and select their own representations of lived experiences. Photographers were required to sign consent forms and photo releases for any photograph used during the research project.

Research partners were asked after their initial *pláticas* to consider the technique for their creative visual narrative project. Research participants digitally documented their experiences during the first two months of the research after they have been provided the general guidelines for the project. Participants were encouraged to incorporate historical photographic representations, artifacts, and examples of cultural rituals. Data collection and reflective practice was concurrent during this phase of the research as research members had opportunity to participate in multiple dialogues held between the initial interview and the cultural sharing retreat.

**Selection of Photographs**

After two months the research participants were asked to select photographs most representative of their lived experiences as transnational teachers. Once photos were chosen participants were asked to reflect on a series of questions regarding their photographic selections.

1. Why did you select this photograph?
2. What prompted you to take this photograph?
3. What did you want to portray with this photograph?
4. How does this picture address the research questions?
5. What were you feeling when you took this picture? And, how do you feel now about the picture?
6. Can you tell me the story represented by the picture?
Based upon their reflection and consideration of these questions participants were asked to summarize a story for each photograph selected. The stories and photographs were shared at the final cultural retreat as a part of their visual narrative presentations.

**Artifacts and Ritual Representation**

Artifacts were documented digitally by participants as a part of the photographs. Additionally, as a portion of field notes I also collected artifacts in the form of photographs, videos, and local cultural icons (Wang, 2006). The artifacts were collected from within the participant’s professional and personal cultural settings (Pink, 2007). The artifacts collected by the participant and researcher served as representations and observable aspects of culture (Pink, 2007).

**Cultural Retreat**

Once the *pláticas* were completed and the narratives transcribed the participants combined their written and visual narratives. Participants were invited to attend a cultural retreat that was held on a Saturday at a local community restaurant. All participants accepted the invitation. The day began with a welcoming breakfast in celebration of their participation in the study. Participants then presented their visual narrative powerpoints (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010).

Participants used their narratives to portray their photo selections. After all research participants had completed their presentation the research team analyzed the data through the process of noticing, collecting, organizing, discussing, and naming the emergent themes of the research (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008).
Method Three: Field Notes

These observables were useful for triangulating what I observed on my visits (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). Extensive field notes were created during the visits and subsequent observations. The field notes assisted in determining the research analysis presented in the study (Merriam, 2009).

Throughout the research visits were conducted with participants in their communities. I made an attempt to visit their local community establishments and their neighborhoods. I spend time with each participant in the study which allowed me to listen and envision firsthand accounts their stories and experiences within the context of their new surroundings (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010).

I observed and took field notes reflecting local educational communities. By visiting local parks, restaurants, and stores I was able to experience the culture and symbolic language of the community in which the participants were living giving me a general idea of their experiences (Spindler & Spindler, 2000).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of organizing, storing, and interpreting the observables collected during the research (Glesne, 2006). Initially, electronic files were created for each research participant in which all observables to include participant selection notes, consent forms, interviews and transcripts, and all documentation provided for their personal ethnographies are maintained. All physical artifacts were digitally documented and returned to the participants. Transcription of interviews and audio/visual data were compiled by using the process of clean transcript which eliminates pauses and utterances common in daily speech patterns. This process can make reading of transcripts
difficult as well as complicate to interpretation of the dialogue (Elliot, 2005).

The data analysis was conducted with coding using the three step process of noticing, collecting, and thinking about the observables. The process involves the construction of categories relevant of the data content while ensuring that the guiding research questions at the core of the research maintained the focus of the study (Merriam, 1998). The coding process for this research was unique as the researcher and the collective of participants co-created meaning in a culminating cultural retreat (Waite, Nelson, & Guajardo, 2007). Participants shared their narratives and participated in dialogue of noticed correlations in their narratives. Observables, which consisted of transcripts of narratives and the visual photo narratives, were analyzed concurrently during the cultural retreat going in and out of the observables, reflecting, interpreting, and correlating data for congruence of meaning and allowing for a natural process of thematic emergence (Patton, 2002). This cyclical process according to Saldana (2009) allows for code creation leading to thematic categories, classification, synthesizing, and ultimately development of meaning.

In the first cycle we read narrative transcripts and reviewed photo narratives demarcating key phrases and looking for descriptive wording. As with written texts we likewise engaged in the same process with other research artifacts and made note of key symbolic language (Pink, 2007). In the second cycle the emerging themes were identified. Additionally, we developed an outline of themes and corresponding support data from participants (Saldana, 2009). This cyclical observable analysis approach used axial coding or analytical coding which included interpretation and reflection (Merriam, 2009).
The researcher performed a member check analysis of thematic patterns in order to examine and compare across the different data sources (Merriam, 1998). Participants through social dialogue and brainstorming identified emergent themes. Participants recorded their findings on chart paper and classified according to categorical research questions and relevance to the experiential impact on transnational teachers.

**Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research embeds within its design the concept of relationships and power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants (Freire, 1970). Qualitative researchers are burdened to carefully consider ethical issues within a study to include power dynamics and confidentiality of participants (Dresser, 1998). This study was designed and remained cognizant of researcher participant relationships that might be affected during or after disclosure of research information. The potential for subjectivity of research interpretation was minimized by co-construction of relevant salient research issues and recommendation. The collection of data and disclosure of potentially dangerous research partner information was minimized by the change of participant names, participant control of transcript inclusion, participant selection of observables, and member checks. (Blackmon & Fairey, 2007).

**Catalytic Validity**

Qualitative research inherently carries a risk of researcher bias due to selective observation, selective reporting, and personal interpretation (Creswell, 2009). In order to reduce the subjectivity within the research I chose to examine descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity and select strategies to prevent researcher bias and increase validity and reliability within the study (Golafshani, 2003). In addressing descriptive
validity the study used triangulation of data, methods, and investigation strategies (Golafshani, 2003). This process of validation allowed the research to be cross-checked throughout the research by participant review, dialogue, and member checking (Creswell, 2009).

In order to address interpretive validity the research employed participant feedback. For example, not only did the research allow for collaborative discussion in the culminating participatory cultural retreat it also ensured that participant interpretation was clearly acknowledged by allowing time for social dialogue which gathered detailed information regarding the process and their interpretations of the transnational teacher experiences (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). The design of the invitational cultural retreat and safe space for social dialogue encouraged the participants to express their innermost thoughts regarding their experiences of tensions and opportunities as transnational teachers. Moreover, the process of peer review was utilized to capture evidence of interpretations and created an astonishingly dynamic experience for research participants (Creswell, 2003).

Additionally, to address the theoretical validity the study was conceptually designed to include multiple theoretical triangulations through the design of theoretical bricolage (Scribner, 2005). As a research partner the study also included reflexivity of the research by including my personal autoethnography (Denzin, 2003) which was critical to self-reflection and identification of potential personal biases and predispositions (Creswell, 2013). Finally, this study engaged in a culminating forum where co-constructed meaning of the research ultimately was used to explain similar problems (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994).
Epistemological Considerations

This study was conducted using, as one of its data probes, a plática session in order to gather participant narratives. The pláticas lasted an average of sixty minutes. Participants were given guiding prompts for their narratives. This process of non-structured natural dialogue allowed for discovery and freedom for the respondent to elaborate or extend upon their early lives, transnational recruitment, and transnational teaching experiences while still allowing the researcher to probe using relevant research focused questions that provide deeper details of participant experiences. Given that the storytelling was not standardized and encouraged depth of information the data, although rich, the narratives were difficult and time consuming to analyze (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997).

Additionally, the research narrowed the respondents to five participants even though throughout the process transnational teachers who heard about the research and came forward requesting to be a part of the study. Though the findings are limited to these five participants, the stories and experiences are ubiquitous; through reader generalizability, we give the power to the reader to decide what is relevant and applicable to their context, experience and story.

This research was culminated in a cultural retreat forum in which participants shared creative photo narrative representations of their experiences (Park, 2001). Granting that focus groups can spark new ideas with the intent of collaboratively creating meaning, which was the justification for using this technique in the study, there is also the limitation that dominant relationships could influence the responses of participants (Waite, Nelson, Guajardo, 2007; Wimmer & Dominick, 1997).
Summary

This study promoted the use of pláticas and creative digital visual narratives presented during a shared retreat (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). Each method resulted in empowering research partners to share cultural rituals, artifacts, life maps, creative storytelling, and pictorial representation of their experiences (Lykes, 2001).

These narrative methods assisted in the participant’s ability to reflect the strengths and concerns of their experiences (Blackmon & Fairey, 2007). The techniques utilized in this study also promoted critical dialogue and knowledge regarding salient issues through discussion of photographs (Blackmon & Fairey, 2007).
IV. JOURNEYS

The category of Cultural Fronts serves as a methodological and theoretical tool to help think about and empirically investigate the historical, structural and everyday ways in which a warp of relationships of hegemony in a given society is constructed. The fronts describe general social relationships which, from the point of view of the daily construction of the meaning of life and of the world, elaborate the evident and the necessary, values and multiple identities. Precisely that which could unite us all. (González, 1997 p. 32)

The purpose of the next five chapters is to take a transnational teaching journey through the pláticas of research partners in order to enlighten our understanding of their experiences and viewpoints that reflect the cultural impacts on their lives as transnational teachers. These chapters seek to introduce a detailed account of the common intersecting experiences that influenced their transnational teaching journeys. Whether explicit or implicit, the intersections of experiences connected their journeys in the retelling of homeland memories, educational backgrounds, recruitment, and transnational personal and professional experiences abroad. Portraits are presented individually to provide thick rich accounts of their personal identities and experiences. Narratives were gathered through a series of storytelling sessions with my research partners and are authentic in their verbatim narrative reflections in their own voices.

Portrait of Saint Genoveva: “Leader of the Tribe”

Genoveva has been embraced as a saint by the transnational teachers that she supports each year as they arrive in a new country and experience culture shock in their personal and professional lives. Her empathy and understanding for the teachers is
authentic, as she herself took the same journey from Spain seven years ago. Genoveva’s inclusion into this research is the result of the critical understanding of her role as a mentor in the lives of all transnational teachers who have followed in her footprints over the last seven years. Her story adds historical value and connects the lives of over one hundred transnational teachers to this study. Genoveva, while serving as a mentor for at least twenty-five new teachers each year, is a full-time elementary bilingual teacher. She spends countless hours preparing teachers prior to their arrival in the United States. Upon their arrival she assists them in securing transportation, housing, and furniture, and escorts them to interviews to different schools until they secure teaching positions. Throughout their three years of transnational teaching she listens to their stories and passionately supports them as they encounter cultural fronts at every turn of their journeys. Genoveva weaves her narrative with the narratives of four other transnational teachers and creates a rich and powerful story of the journeys of five transnational educators from Spain teaching in Texas.

Plática of Saint Genoveva

Figure 3. Cultural Event.
Paving the Way

I was born in Madrid, the capital of Spain, almost 35 years ago. I have a small family, just my mom, dad, brother and me. They got a divorce when I was really young. I had to grow up really fast, that’s part of my life. I have friends I consider my family. Because of my family situation, having friends around was always important to me. I always wanted to work with kids. I first wanted to be a doctor, then I wanted to be a psychologist, then finally I wanted to be a teacher. I ended up going to college and got two degrees in Spain. One degree is in elementary school, and one for being an English teacher to teach English as a second language.

Early Struggles and Work

I started to work when I was really young. I started working when I was 21, so this is my 13th year to teach because I have time in Spain and time here. So I’m able to compare both systems what works and what doesn’t work. I started in the school where I did my internship, so I grew up there as a teacher. Then because living in Madrid is expensive, I tried to find different jobs other than teaching, so I always worked in summer camps. My Christmas and my summer breaks was working extra jobs at concerts, seating people, or going outside with kids all summer long, or teaching after school classes. I was a clown in children’s parties. I did almost everything I could and that was tough because I move out, not in my 30’s but in my 20’s. I bought my own apartment, and it was really expensive, so I had to take these extra jobs all the time. I live by myself for 5 years. They were interesting and tough years to be by myself but I was looking for something.
Figure 4. Professional Development.

Being an English teacher in Spain, we are always behind in second languages, and the more I knew, the more I knew we were doing wrong. So I was always looking for professional development and opportunity too, but everything was that I needed to pay for it or I didn’t have time to go because I was teaching and working after school. I wanted to go back to college and find something else, but it was not easy, so that’s how I ended up here.

Push Factor-I went to one of these trainings for English teachers, and the teacher told me that the very best opportunity to get to know another system and get to know bilingual was to come abroad. So I find out what it was all about and think about it. That was back in October the year before I came. A friend in my school was also willing to go over because he wanted to learn more English. We both went to Canada that summer, the summer before we came here, for a month. We went to Toronto. Being there for that month, that’s when I realized that’s what I needed to do. I needed to be out and learn more about the language and foreign experiences of other countries. In my whole life my
momma always pushed me to go abroad, and she pushed me to go in summer but she never wants me to go now. Now she regrets and wants me to come home.

I never really wanted to go until then. I was scared to go. Even when I was away on those summers, I was in Spain working and doing different things, but never abroad. But once I was in Canada for that month, I went finding out and thinking about being confident in my English, and about that I could make it and it was just what I needed.

**Recruitment to the United States**

When I found out about the program I talked to my friend, who now is my husband and father of my baby coming in October. I say to him, well I found this program and I think we could try. It’s pretty good and everybody is having great experiences. They recommended us Texas, Illinois, Florida because these were three states where teachers were having good experiences. It was not the same in California, so we talk about it and said we’ll see. So when we came back it was Christmas, and it was like only two weeks to turn in all the paperwork. So we really didn’t think about it, we just send in the paperwork and see what happens and we got it. We got it the first time and wanted each of us to be in the programs and to go through the interview. So I didn’t say anything to my parents or my family or friends just in case. I didn’t want to scare anybody, but by the time it was getting close to the interview I needed to say because we needed to take the day off. So we kind of announce it, but we really didn’t have any hope, we just go to see what the interview was about, what could they offer and see if it was interesting. I think I never really thought about it like it was going to happen, until it really happened. It took me a year here to realize what was going. I mean everything goes so fast. Everything is so different, and you change your life in so many ways that you
don’t even have time to realize what you are doing with your life. It took me a year to
realize this was a place I wanted to be. It was the right place for me. The way it was here
changed my whole life.

The Interview

So we went to the interview; it was tough because I was lucky and I got the
internship, and I was hired so it was really the first process for me. So I was really proud
to get to be selected. We didn’t know anything about Austin. We knew San Antonio and
Houston but nothing about Austin. We were lucky it came to us and we realized that
later.

Telling Friends and Family

So that day I remember I met with my friends, and I have these friends since I was
four years old. In Spain we have schools for elementary and high school in the same
place, so we grew up together since we were four years old to seventeen years old and we
go off to college. Since we go to college we find work but we keep on having a beer
almost every night after work. On that day I met with the four of them and I told them I
was selected and I’m going to Austin. They are all shocked and surprised that it was
really going to happen. My idea was to just come for a year and see. That’s what I told
my mom so that’s why she was so upset when I decide to stay. I really didn’t know what
was going to happen so I couldn’t live with myself to say not to go. I just had so see what
was going to happen and I could always come back. My job was safe for three years so
they save our jobs because they want us to come back. So I was safe on that place.
Family Support

I told my mom this is what I want. I have an opportunity, and it was just a year, and she should support me. It was so tough for her but she supported me and my dad did too. I’m ok with my mom, but I have a weird different relationship with my dad. When I was like twelve years old he decided to work in South America, so he was traveling. So we love each other but we don’t have that close relationship that we need to talk every day like my mother. My dad can be like three weeks without talking and he’s fine and I’m fine too. He was happy for me too because he has that experience of living abroad.

He knew it was going to be good for me. Then my brother was fine because he’s fine with everything I do. My friends were kind of, well we were really used to be together, doing everything together, and celebrate weddings and birthdays, and so it was tough to let me go. I think on the other side it helps them to start doing other things like getting married, or having kids or like we were moving on with other things in our lives. I get to go back summer and Christmas. Thank God for technology, Skype, email, and texting but it’s tough because the schedule is crazy. You know you can’t Skype during the day; hours are so different but thanks for technology. My mom likes to travel so it’s also an excuse for us. The second year we met at spring break in New York. The first year she was so upset I was staying she never came. Only my brother and me, but I’m the girl so… but now she comes. So I met her in Chicago spring break, and she came here because she’s retired now. The other thing is the money. It is very expensive to come here to stay or to visit. You know when you Skype you feel so lonely because you know I miss being there, being with my friends every day. I miss going to parties, having lunch together, and talking on the phone for hours. They say it feels like you are always here
anyway and nothing has changed. One of my best friends when I grow up, every time I go back, after a few hours says it’s like you are never gone…but I am.

**Marrying**

My husband and I came as friends. He was a teacher too. After a year of sharing an apartment we see that our friendship was better than any other relationship that we were trying, so we became, you know, dating. We hid it for a while, to see how it was working. Once we figured out that it was working, we announced it, and it was fine. It was easier for us that way, to be with a friend when we came. We didn’t get married because we didn’t need to because the culture is different here from in Spain.

**Arriving in Texas**

When we first got here everything was different than now. I wish people could see a little bit of what we went through so they could understand. At that time, the people who were coming to recruit us was not the human resources department, it was the bilingual department. So it was the bilingual department who came, and human resources didn’t agree, so they didn’t support. So they still came without the human resources approval. They spent a week in Italy. So they had two problems. Human resources and everyone knew they were going on break to Italy after Spain. So that didn’t help us. So the way they did is someone from the bilingual department would help us but they didn’t know all the things that we needed to do. They couldn’t understand how different it was for us, so they couldn’t prepare us for what was going to happen. Now teachers come in mid-July so there is a month to prepare. I came at the end of July and only had two weeks. We were all at training just for legislation and all that and it was the same week as bilingual training, so we missed the whole week of bilingual training for the district. So
we didn’t know anything about bilingual education. Since then the expectations were
doing interviews because we did not have job assignments. So we didn’t know where or
what grade we were going to teach.

First Weekend

We decided five of us to rent a house. We shared a house for at least a month.
Before that we were at college for four days and La Quinta Motel. But during our stay at
the college we didn’t know what to do and didn’t feel safe, so we rented the house to
have somewhere safe to be. We knew it was going to take a long time to have a position,
so we make contact with somebody like an apartment searcher or somebody like this. We
had a translator, but really no help because no one knew what to do. Going to see a house
we rent a car and went to the door for like an hour and a half with nobody showing up.
After two hours they call and say we are not interested in renting the house. They say
“We are just selling it so do you want to buy it?” We said, “Oh no, we aren’t going to buy
a house.” So we were out in the street on Friday night. So we called the hotel and the
rooms were still available, so we went back to the hotel and that was our home for the
weekend.

Shared rooms, shared beds, one rental car for five people. All the money that you
spend is from you, not from the district. Nobody helps you and we are trying to save. We
didn’t have GPS or internet on our phones and we didn’t know where anything was. We
did have international driver’s licenses but we drive all manual in Spain so that was
different.
Third Day Rented Rooms

We spend the weekend, and then our person found a woman, friend of a friend of a friend, who had a big house. She had three rooms and she really wanted to help us so she offered to rent those rooms for us. So that’s where we ended up and it was far away from everything. We were all over the place and the one car. One married couple, one with boyfriend, and me and my friend. So that’s where we were on Monday and we rented in that house for three months.

New Teacher Training and Job Searching

That same Monday we were there, we started at new teachers training. After being there till 3:30 they picked us up and said, “You three have an interview.” We still had to interview to find a position because the bilingual department couldn’t assign positions. We were just picking up whatever was left. I remember that feeling at a school it was just like we were cows. They say, “I don’t care. Just send me anybody. Just send me three. I don’t care about their resumes, I don’t care their backgrounds, and I don’t care their experience.” So that feeling was horrible. So I leave my family and my friends, and leave a school where I was recognized, where they knew and valued me. Here they just need to fill a position. So we just said we don’t want to go to that interview. We felt that they were not valuing what we were bringing. We were not looking for a job in Spain. We had our jobs. We had everything. We came here because we wanted to give something and we wanted to learn. We didn’t need a job to eat we were professionals. Here we just didn’t feel valued. You understand later once you are in the system, but then it was super frustrating because of all we had given up. So we didn’t go to the interview or get a job. So out of the nine of us, on the Monday that school started, four of us didn’t
have a job. They decided to assign us to different campuses so you have a place to report
in the morning. So we were assigned to three different campuses. Then that next week
they called us for interviews and I got the job. So that Friday before school starts that
Monday I have a job. So some of us felt like they don’t want us here we are just placed us
here.

**Principals and Placement**

The principal makes the decisions, which is different than in Spain. In Spain that
principal is someone who got assigned to that position but is like the same level or
position as you. Here you are the king or the queen of the castle and you do whatever you
want. You can choose and assign people as you want, each school is different in the
district, and the principal is really a different concept here than in Spain. So the teachers
that were placed did not have a good experience at all. It was a nightmare for them. They
stayed there all year then they moved to another school. It takes a lot to come here so you
don’t want to be the one who gives up. You want to try the best you can to survive, to do
your best, and to learn. If you want to go back you can, but you want to try everything
before you make that decision.

**Teacher Relationships**

The relationship with me and the other teachers at the school was fine, we were a
team. There was no problem with that but we still felt they were not valuing you for what
you bring. The same thing is going to happen again this year because the twenty five
teachers will come and they will not have positions and they will have to place them.
This still happens every year that they are placed but have no jobs and maybe not wanted
by principal. When they are placed it is a bad situation that the principal did not hire them
and may not want them. It helps a lot if the principal has had other teachers from Spain because they understand the culture and understand what they are going through. So it gets easier year after year as more teachers from Spain come to the district and you have had them on your campus, or someone else has had one. It is getting easier, but there are still so many people that don’t understand what we go through when you come, and so teachers don’t stay, or it is very hard for them the time they are here.

**Everything is Different**

The way you arrange your classroom, your relationship with the families, and the relationship with other staff on campus because you don’t have time. In Spain you have the lunchtime and coffee time together. I remember some of them wanting to share with families in America, but trust me you don’t want that because the first year is so overwhelming. You don’t want to make new friends or worry to learn English. You only want to meet with somebody that you’re going to trust and is going to share with you whatever you are going through. You can’t feel like you are going home and still taking a test and having to learn and know everything. I was lucky to have my friend with me all the time. Most are not so lucky to have that family or friend with them to come here. You feel like you are starting over again and you are alone always.

**Negotiating Cultural Fronts**

You always have that group of support of the teachers that come that year with you, if you want, but it still is really tough and most of them don’t stay. Of the ones that came with me only two are still here, and only four out of all of the years. I stay because there are still opportunities to explore and learn, and even sometimes I am tired because there is no perfect system. I still feel motivated when I look for professional development
and there is something that I like, or joining a group I am learning. I like meeting people who are also learning and so I still have that feeling that I have things to learn here. So that keeps for me enough to balance the negative.

**Pulls to Homeland**

You do have the other feeling that if you were in Spain you would work less hours, you have a better schedule, you will wake up at 6:00 or 5:30 in the morning and you have your family close, friends, and places that you like to go closer. Maybe professionally it’s not the best place to be right now, because Spain is a mess with everything that is going on in bilingual education. It depends on who you are. There are people that say I have a job I go there and just do my job. They don’t think about it, it’s just a job. For me it’s more than a job, so I get frustrated that I want to go home and feel sad that things are so bad. There are people who can live with that, they just go in the classroom and close the door, and don’t care about what is going on or want to change the world. They just say it’s too much to balance here with testing, administration, and how hard it is to stay. It’s just too much going on for them so they go back to Spain and close the door to teach. I think teachers here close the door sometimes too, but for me I am wanting to, as I say, change the world.

**Value Time**

It takes a while with all that going on here for them to trust you. I just now feel trusted after seven years and it’s really frustrating. My principal is now one of my good friends and I joke with him that you don’t trust me still and he says, “Why?” I say when you come in my room to see what is happening and you should know already. I tell him it’s not just you, but when you come with somebody from the district and they are
checking on you and it is like I say, “Am I doing something wrong?” Like I have two visits today and there must be something going on, because you don’t tell me and you come twice into my room today with people. You do this two or three times and I think, “What’s going on?” You feel like all the time they are watching you, and you don’t have that in Spain. So people can do whatever they want there. Here it is frustrating because they don’t tell you, and you don’t know why they are watching you so much. I do know some teachers that have been teaching 40 years and teach the same way, never changing. They don’t speak English to the teachers and they are ESL. I know you also have those kinds. You know it just takes time to open your mind to get to know the system and understand it, to see the positive and negative, and so the first and second year is not enough time to really know how things are here. It takes much more time and the Visas are only three years. Most teachers don’t even stay that long because it is so hard to know how to change. You mess it up with your own situation, personality, and frustration. It’s a mess because the system is a mess and you are a mess. It’s not easy. It’s not easy.

Mentoring

This is why I started to support to help the group, because there was nothing and I know how hard it is from my own experiences. So, I ask and human resources started to talk and say they needed a plan to help us. When they came back from hiring new teachers they say that they would like to help with the group and talk to the other teachers from Spain. So I was thinking we needed to have a meeting and organize ourselves so we can help new teachers when they come. So I went to the meeting. At the meeting everyone else was busy doing this and that so it was just me, and that’s how I end up coordinating. We sat down and were brainstorming all the things they needed when they
come like having their visa, license, contracts, trainings, positions, apartment, utilities, car and insurance, and then all the paperwork they should bring from Spain. They need to have phones so they can use here. Medicines they need to take or get when they are here. They even need to understand to leave some kind of power for their family to signs things there in Spain maybe when they are far away. They need money, tickets to fly, social security, and then of course to know where to live when they come here.

So I start with them in May with working with them on paperwork. Just doing the application paperwork for the district is huge. So that is long and tedious and you are not used to that so it’s tricky. They must have their Visa and it is not so easy. You need a few other applications and to go to the embassy, complete paperwork, and pay more fees. So they are going through all that when I contact them all in May. Then by the time the schools here are contacting and interviewing them they are asking me what about this school and what about that principal. They are confused and scared to be changing so much and not knowing even where they will work or live.

Then somebody one year had the bright idea to get them hotel rooms together. They had rooms of twelve people in the same rooms. So you imagine somebody coming with three bags from a twenty hour trip and getting in one room with that many people that they have never even met. They have money, cash with them six-thousand, seven-thousand, or sometimes ten-thousand dollars in cash. You know you have to wait to come here with the cash to put in the bank, so bring it with you. When I saw the hotel I knew I needed them, all of them, out of there as soon as I can. It took me a week to get them all out and sharing apartments or whatever. The situation was terrible, you couldn’t sleep, it was loud and you can’t sleep with people you don’t know in that situation.
They were all getting here on different days, so every day I was going to the airport two or three times a day. They were getting here on different flights and different schedules. Some of them were also taking buses from other places like Houston to get here. Then they have no transportation so I drive them around town wherever they need to go. I drive some of them to interviews because, like me when I came, they didn’t have positions yet. So I was working probably eighteen hours a day from seven in the morning until midnight doing everything they needed. You know some of them have issues from when they get here with social security or getting into the country at the airport. Some of them were going to an interview, and another interview, and still not getting a job so they were getting frustrated. I was trying to get them a house or even a host.

After the first two weeks everybody got a job. Everybody had an apartment or was with somebody staying until their apartments were ready. Then they started two weeks of training for new teachers and bilingual, two weeks of non-stop just focus on professional development. The goal had been to get everything else done and just focus on professional development.

The second year we found them college houses to stay. I went to see and it wasn’t all that bad like the hotel for all of them. We got a bus and they are a group so they feel altogether. I used the bus to pick them up. We would drop them off at their dorm and we would take them altogether to get things like their social security, telephones, bank accounts, and buy cars. In a weekend we bought 8 or 9 cars. So this group had a lot of husbands and wives. They rode around depending on where we were going too, because they also have to get all their paperwork too. So I was working with them too because they needed help as well. In two weeks I got almost all of them out of the college house.
Among all of them there were three or four that were older. One of them was oldest but he trust me and follow what I told him. There were three, I call them golden girls, they maybe trust me a little but they wanted to do things their way and they don’t listen to me. I knew I needed to respect that. They were overwhelmed and after two weeks they didn’t have jobs or an apartment, no furniture, no anything. At 3:30 after school they are frustrated and it was very humid and everyone else was getting things done. They were crying and like feeling they were left out and everything. I told them they needed to try to follow what I told them. Still they spent a weekend following shopping on Craigslist to buy things to save money and there was three of them. So while for everybody else I was renting a U-Haul trailer and driving them to IKEA to buy everything they need and delivering to five different apartments. That night everybody had a bed and whatever they needed, and those three ladies had bought one TV together. One of them was really nice. She understood what was going on and she was listening to me say you should listen to me and she said, “I know.” I’m like really you spent a whole weekend buying one TV and everybody else had a car, apartment, bed, and you are still in the college house. I guess I understand when I’m in my 50’s or 60’s I don’t want a 30 year old telling me what to do. I understand that. It depends on who you are.

One of them was calling me on my birthday night. She didn’t stop on the traffic light. Then she didn’t stop on the stop sign and the police car was behind her. She was stopped and told to get out of the car and a lot of police cars were around her. The police wanted her to explain to them what was going on but she couldn’t speak that good of English for some reason. That night the police call me and ask who I am and if I know her, and I say, “Yes.” They say, “Well, she is not allowed to drive and we need you to
come pick her up at the police station.” So I was waiting for my husband to get home to go out for my birthday meal. I’m at the house and quickly drove there. When I went there she was crying so much she couldn’t explain what had happened. So I asked the police what happened. They said she turned on a traffic light and didn’t stop either, and we were behind her. They were going to stop her but she kept going at the stop sign too. They asked me if I wanted to see it because they recorded it. I told them I trusted them and didn’t need to see it. She told us all about her being here new. The police say, “She is in no condition to drive. She’s out of control, doesn’t know what she is doing and is going to kill somebody. What if she kills somebody tonight?” I thought, “She is my responsibility.” I explained that she was going through a lot and they were nice and allowed me to drive her car to her residence. I told them I would drive it and put it in a safe place. So I left her there with an officer and drove her car to the residence while they were following me. I came back in the police car and then I drove her home. My husband kept asking, “Where are you?” I had to say, “I’m sorry I am in the police car and station.” I took her then to her residence and she was still crying. Then all week long she was talking how unfair they were and she was like an angel without wings. She said they took her license. I told her you don’t have or need a driver’s license here because you don’t even have insurance yet here. You could be in jail right now but she kept saying, “They are cutting my wings.” She was not ok and she was one of the ones that left not long after she was here. She was going to talk to the judge and she said say what I asked her to say. I told her to say, “I am sorry that I was driving cars and I’m going to pay whatever I need to do.” She forgot to go to the judge and they told her if she didn’t do the online driving thing she was going to be under arrest, so I ended up doing the online thing with her.
After only a year she is coming back to Spain and that is good. So it’s not easy for everybody to accept help and it’s a lot to come here with all of the changes in your life. It’s a lot to swallow and be humble and say to someone, “Tell me how to do it,” when you are used to doing everything by yourself in your country you understand.

With each group I start earlier. Now when they arrive they get a USB with information, and they start calling me after they are interviewed in Spain. That allows me from week one in March to start talking to them. There are usually about twenty-five of them in the group. This year some of them will be in the dorm or they can choose a host, but since there are not enough they will have to choose. Right now every day I have about fifty-five messages when I wake up in the morning because they are seven hours before me. So they are asking questions about everything like what kind of food you can bring and important things like paperwork. Some of them have lived abroad and they are more used to things. The things that they are going to ask are: what do you need to bring with you and about issues they will have when they are here. Each of them has their own issues going on and so what you are going to face here sometimes is going to be much. For some of them you can feel it already that it’s going to be too much for them. It’s also about what you bring with you when you come. Some of them are running away from whatever situation there is there for them. It could be a personal, professional or family situation. Some of them have issues that they haven’t dealt with there and when they get here, many times, it makes it worse. For example, many think the money is better here but it is also very expensive, so that’s a lot of pressure. The life here is very different from what you are used to and that can be very good or very bad too. Just by talking to them on the phone, I can tell you already which ones of them are going to have a really
hard time and probably are not going to make it even one year, but I can’t say that to them.

We have not talked about veteran teachers going to Spain for the interviews but I think it might be fine that some can be going. I think it’s important because I think it’s easier for me. There’s no way they can hide something from me, I can tell on the phone when there may be a problem. Sometimes they ask me if they should go on the phone and I say, “I only know you from two weeks ago and you are asking me so maybe you shouldn’t be going, you don’t even know what you want to do.” I worry that they don’t have anybody closer to ask or that they haven’t thought about what they are doing coming here without knowing. Sometime I think they should talk to a psychologist here or there because what will they do if they fall down.

There are people who are very good at the interviews and when they are someone from a different culture then maybe you don’t understand what they are saying. I would love to be in those interviews because I would know what to ask and what to hear when they are talking about wanting in the program. I’m sure it would be easier for me to see what was going on really. I can understand the systems they are teaching in and the cultures from where they are coming and they are very different in different places in Spain. I love for them to be successful and I always tell them I want for them to be successful. Just to be here tells a lot about somebody. You have to have a lot of guts just to be here and try this thing but for some of them it was a mistake. They were not realizing what it was like here with the life, the school, the administrators, and all of the work. For some of them, yes, it was a bad mistake and you have this conversation with them and they tell you. I have to ask myself, “How was she interviewed, how was she
selected?” The profiles are so different among all of them that you don’t understand how the selection happens sometimes. I get it that it is not easy because I guess people can do really good interviews but it’s also like nobody is listening to what they are really saying about themselves and why they want to come to this place to teach. You think maybe they don’t care they just want them to fill empty jobs in the schools.

**Prejudices on the Job**

There are also prejudices that you have here. I am worried about maybe that they come here without a position yet. I know they are going to have a job but it might not be the one they are going to be good at because of their profile is being different. They are worried too, some of them, that they aren’t going to have a job. One of their first questions is, “What schools are you going to recommend?” I’m not going to recommend any schools. I really want them to get a job and not have prejudices about where they go because you don’t know where they can go to get a job. I will tell them when they have to make a decision where they might go to be a better situation if they have a choice. They have some options about taking some jobs but not many. They are usually open with me about where they think they can work and I can suggest yes or no. Or I can say talk to someone about that school first so you know what you are getting into. Sometimes I might say wait and see about something better.

**One Year or Three**

Most people stay for at least the first year but some have left before that. Not many have left here before the year but many from other places leave early. I think the support of the group we have now helps a lot but still most do not stay. It does help knowing that people before you have been going through the same thing or worse. Then
also at the end of the year they sometimes forget how hard and think maybe it is to be better. We tell them wait till Christmas or wait till the end of the year. They hear this from so many so they think ok I’m going to wait. After Christmas sometimes they tell me, “You were right, it is getting better.” Then the second year is sometimes better, and the third year too, but then it is time for them to go and they are just now being successful. Having that support now helps a lot. Some of them have been very close to leaving and I have drunk a lot of beer with them. I say, “We are all going through this just cry as much as you need to, it’s fine and you are going to make it.” It usually hits them in October or end of September. It’s really when you have the first round of testing, parent conferences and all that when it gets so bad. Second semester is hard but different. Almost all of them are in lower grades and they start to get more used to things since it’s the second round of all of the testing. They understand more the second semester and the summer is getting closer. Spring break is coming and they are taking trips and forgetting everything.

I think more and more even though the Visa for three years they just come for a year to see what is going on. After they make it in the one year then they start to think if they want to keep staying for the three years. It’s curious that a few think to come to stay but they also go back because they are secured in their jobs in Spain. I think less and less they think of staying much longer over three years. Of twenty five each year only one or two think of staying and only four all of all these years that the district has been doing this have stayed longer. I think it is beneficial to the school if they stay one or two years because the Spanish level that they have is good but it would be better to stay the last year when they are better to teach here. They all have something in common. You are
special if you make the decision to come here, and that makes you a tougher person, and it makes you willing to give a lot. They all are vocational professionals, and teaching is not something that you are just trying for your career. Sometimes you find out teachers here teach because they couldn’t find something else. Teachers from Spain this is their career and their passion. Most of them have had at least three or more years of experience and some with more than twenty. It takes so much to come here, to be dedicated, and risk everything that you are giving up. I wish people here understood how much it takes to risk all you know.

**Shocking Personality Culture**

I think we can be shocking for people because we speak what we think from our principles. Whether we agree or disagree we speak what we think and don’t always follow protocol. We are loud people, and I think sometimes it is shocking to have us on your campus. I think because of the passion and language sometimes people feel insecure to speak to you because their Spanish is not so much like ours, or good. I find many people who know Spanish but never speak to me in Spanish because they are not comfortable and think we are going to laugh at them or embarrass them. I used to feel the same when I was to be talking to them in English. Now on most campuses the teachers they end up finding friends or support, but after many years. I think on most campuses they end up valuing what they bring. What you need to know is that it takes years to build these friends and supports, longer than most of them will stay.

Probably at first you will get Hispanic friends and then white. Mostly because you just don’t have the time to make friends. We are all busy working like never before in our careers. Here there is no culture of getting together after work to have dinner with
anybody during the week. In Spain it is every day with someone. Here on the weekend you do your life with your family so there is no time for school people. So it takes time to cross that fence and get people to be open, and maybe you think then I’m not staying anyway so it doesn’t matter. You don’t feel bad at school all the time, but at the end of the day you are by yourself and alone. You just don’t make any connections the way you feel with anybody from your country. It’s tough especially if you come by yourself; you are very lonely. Tired and lonely. As we have shared in this research, we know our stories must be told so that those who follow us will have better experiences as transnational teachers. We have ten teachers that have arrived here over the last two years that are going to work now with the Spanish Embassy. We have been approved by the embassy to write our report. We are going to write a compare and contrast of the two systems. We want to open the minds of Spanish teachers and districts in the United States. Four of these teachers have shared their narratives as a part of this research and they will share these same experiences with the Spanish Embassy project to be published.
V. PORTRAIT OF PAPÁ FAUSTO: “FATHER LUCKY”

Our journey through the narratives of transnational teachers continues with Papá Fausto, who often refers to himself as lucky. Given the option to embark on a career as a banker in Spain, he chose to forgo this respected field in order to pursue his true passion of teaching language and technology in the classroom. The resulting life and educational experiences of this decision are what he believes make him so lucky. Papá Fausto comes from humble family beginnings as do many of us who come from the small villages of Spain. Through vast educational experiences that have transformed him into a true transnational educator. His many experiences abroad before arriving in the United States prepared him with an understanding of how to navigate transnational teaching. I think this makes becoming a transnational teacher in the United States easier. He shares the stories of his life and experiences teaching in multiple regions of the world. He takes us on a journey through the countries of Spain, Italy, Germany, and the United States. He has managed to traverse these cultural fronts and remain true to his love of teaching.

Plática of Papá Fausto

Figure 5. Papá Fausto.
My Early Life and Country

Where shall I start? My country of origin is Spain. I was born in Madrid, forty, I don't know how many more years ago. I've always lived in Madrid. My parents were a humble family. My father was a civil servant who worked for the Spanish postal service. My mom stayed at home because she had four children that she had to raise. She was the base of the family. I mean the foundation of the family, my father, had to work in a couple of places at the same time to be able to maintain the family. I was always been, you could say, a good student. I always got good grades, and I got those good grades without working too much let’s say. So, that's a problem sometimes, because when you start going through the grades and that stuff, you are used to working just a little bit, and then you started realizing that things has start becoming harder. That’s a problem, too, when you are a teacher, because you tend to think that the kids are going to be more or less in the same profile as you were when you were a child. So you think all of them are going to be able to catch up with everything, or to understand everything the ways you did, and you realize immediately that it doesn't work that way. I have in my family, we are four. I'm the youngest, so all my brothers started leaving my home before me, and I was the last one who rested there.

Banking and Education

I've always studied in the public schools in the Spanish education system, and always in the area where I lived in the center of Madrid, until I went to the university. I started working when I was eighteen, and I did not start working in education field, but in the banking. I started working in a bank, and I was working there for more or less a year and a half. My brother, we worked at the same bank, although we didn't have anything to
do with each other. The bank was fun because the people who worked with me knew him too.

I probably had the opportunity of continuing there, but I don't know if I was lucky or unlucky. I think now, I think that I was very lucky, but the place where I was started working I didn't like it at all. I decided that the banking area was not my field, and then I decided to resign before time to prepare what in Spanish is called them "the concorso." When I left people have said, "What is your brother doing? Where is he going? How is he able to leave a bank and this world that is so exciting and everything to become a teacher?"

I started working to obtain a position as a teacher in the public education system, which is very different from what it is in here. I, in any case, was very lucky because that year, not like in the previous years, for all the positions that I could take I think that there were like two-hundred and fifty jobs or something. I decided to do this, to resign my current job and start preparing for this thing.

When I finished my high school I took let say a year, because I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do in teaching. In Spain, that very moment you have to be, to spend one year in the military service. I took that year the advantage to volunteer for this military service so what I could do was instead of going where they decided that I had go, I could more or less choose where I am. I stayed in Madrid and that allowed me to begin, to start my college, my university the very next year. So, I started the military service in March 1986 I think it was. I finished in July 1987, it was 16 months. It was longer because you decided to volunteer, but you could decide to stay in your home town. It was interesting because that allowed me to spend that whole year in first year of the degree,
and I mean it was hard, because it was not easy to do both. I studied in the evening. Being in the military you don't depend on yourself, you depend on what others think that you have to be doing. There were periods that were not very simple, but as I said before, I tended to be a good student. I could catch up with that first year. It was funny, too, because when I went to the university, to the campuses, everybody saw me with this military uniform and things, because in that very moment you could not leave your camp without the official uniform. I think it was two years later that everybody could go home with their usually civil clothes, but in that moment, no, so I arrived there and everybody said, "Oh, he is here!" I decided to be a teacher, and then the degree I decided to take was a three-year degree to become a teacher and specialized in language. In Spanish and English language most of my class roommates were women. So it was, let’s say, strange for them seeing a guy with this uniform. Everybody knew me, but I didn't know anybody because I arrived too late. Everybody knew me and people made fun of me and saying, "Oh, you are guy who is in the military and thinks to be a teacher.”

**Teacher Profile**

I've always been good at languages in general. Well now I speak three languages, Spanish, English, and Italian and am more or less fluent in all of them of course. Spanish is my first language, but I'm fluent in all three, and I think that was the main reason I chose to teach language. I've always been interested in math and science stuff, but I guess perhaps other things make you think to be a certain type of teacher. If I have had a teacher who had been able to see that in me, perhaps I could have been choosing that field instead. I was never very, very lucky with the people in that area. I was lucky to be
working with or the teacher that I have in that field so I felt more comfortable with the language.

A couple of them really engaged me in what I always thought is very curious, languages. I've always been interested in the analytic part of language. I'm interested in literature too, how to read a lot of books and that thing, but that's not that the field that I like best. I like more the theory of languages, analyzing the language, what the word means, and so I guess that's the meeting point between my two fields that I'm more interested in. I've always been very, very, very interested in computers from since I was a child. I have my first Sinclair that's I think ZX Spectrum this thing that was not even a computer. I'm talking like 1980 or something like that, and I have one of those I don't know how. I know my second brother, the one who works with electronics and all that stuff, the place where he was working, I think that they had an offer or something of "If you buy this, you get a discount," and he decided to buy one for the family. From that very moment he didn't use it at all, he is never interested, but my third brother, the one who is just before me, and me were keen on it from the very moment that thing arrive at the house. We started programming in basic when I was like twelve. I started with my first computer, and that was then the other thing that I was always interested in and other field that I would like to study more started. I would like to get a degree in computers because I'm good at that. I mean, everybody says so when they talk to me. It is something that you never have time for, so all the things that I could learn have been self-learning. I'm trying to catch up with all the things that are out there. There are thousands of them and you have to decide what you want to learn about all that stuff. On one hand I had decided academics, and on the other hand I have that part of me that liked researching in
and working on things, and I am always developing by myself. Both things run together
for a long, long time up to right now.

I have to be studying and working all my life. All the university and stuff that I
have been taking was in the evenings. It was hard because I met my wife when we were
very, very young. I'm talking about the high school time. We stay together and we did not
have time to see each other. We have to meet at ten in the evening or something like that
and until eleven we meet and we say, "see you tomorrow." It was in the weekends that we
have the time to meet and go out. We didn't have too much time either, because you have
to prepare all the things that you had to study and all the things that you had to do for
work. I think that you are able to do that because you are very, very young and you have
all the energy in the world. I need that much energy now for being here working.

Teaching

It was quite a long time after that when I took my three-year degree. But of course
I knew that after resigning. If I have known before perhaps I would have stayed in
banking, but I was able to pass all the exams and I got my first job as a teacher in 1990.
Then I started teaching as a primary school teacher. I was already a teacher, but I decided
that I wanted to study a little bit more, so I took my master. It was a three more years and
it was on specializing in English. I did that while I was working. I was 22 years in that
very moment in Spain, and the education system was different so I was teaching eighth
graders, 14-year-old kids, some of them 15, some of them 16, so the gap between them
and me was very, very short. Well my older brother who is ten years older than me, he
has been a teacher as well since he was 24 or something like that, but in my family, the
rest of the family have never been related or link to the education area. Things in Spain
have changed so much in the last forty years. You feel that you can cope with everything, but you have to start thinking and establish priorities for your family. I am going to have kids and to see them grow up with good experiences.

**Teaching Secondary**

In 2002 I decided I had to go step forward, and then I decided I wanted to teach the secondary stage. I took the same exam that I have taken like thirteen years before for the primary teacher profile and then I got my secondary. I liked so much the computer science and stuff that I decided to take the risk of doing the exam in that area as a secondary teacher. I started with being a computer science secondary teacher because in Spain you don't need to have the degree to teach that. You only need to have a master degree then you pass the exams and you get a certification. I was able to pass the exams. There were six different exams, and because I was already a teacher, I didn't have to take all of them. I took like three of them but I was able to pass the exams and then I was able to go to the secondary level as a computer science teacher.

Two years after that I decided to take my certification in the Spanish. I decided to take the certification so that in Spain in the secondary level I could teach Spanish language, literature, and computer science. I'm probably the only teacher is Spain who does all of that. It’s curious but in Spain I cannot teach English in the secondary level because I didn't take that exam. If I want to teach it I probably I could, I mean probably there was a way to do it and take an easiest exam or something, just to show that you are able to teach English, but it's curious, it's interesting because I cannot teach English in the public schools in Spain in the secondary level. I could teach English in elementary schools, but only can teach in the secondary level Spanish as a language, literature,
grammar, and computer science in high school.

Certification Process

I don’t know what I would have to do to teach secondary here and have not studied or gathered information about the certification process here. I understand that documents are so different and probably you know that we are teaching here with this agreement between the department of state and the department of education in Spain, so we don't need to certify everything. We get this three-year certification that TEA allows us to teach here without having all this process. I love teaching elementary school because this is what I came from in Spain teaching most of the time. I had never taught second grade, first grade or kinder. Here I am teaching second grade and teaching English, Spanish, and self-contained science. You can see the thousands of computers in my classroom. They gave me the oldest computers they have here, and I ask for permission to re-master them and I got it. The district technician who works with us was fantastic. He ask for the permissions from the principal too, so I re-mastered everything. All of my kids can have a computer. I love working with both things at the same time, and even though they are old, in Spain we would not have these kinds of resources.

Experience

All the way from Madrid I have been working. I have been teaching, but I have been also cooperating with the different administrations in Spain. I came in and out from teaching for a couple of years and then for three years. You are always hired as a teacher there, so it doesn't matter that you are doing other stuff, you will keep on being a teacher. You just have to be related to teaching activities. I was working in different levels of the education in Spain. I collaborated in the development of software things like desktop and
web applications. I'm talking about the year 2000, so internet was not the best. I collaborated the department of education of Spain for the development of software when I was as a primary teacher. I also in Spain was the bookkeeper who is not an administrative profile but also a teaching profile. You are actually teaching but you have some hours that you are in charge of this thing doing the equivalent to an assistant principal. I did that for less than a year, and then I moved to this collaboration of the software development.

**Transnational Program**

I went back to school was talking to many, many, people about this program. In 2007 I decided I wanted to start gathering all my documents to see if I could participate because it’s also sort of a contest. You have to participate in a process in which they evaluate with what you have been doing, so they give you like a grade. You get a series of points and they say you have this and this. I had very few points but I decided I wanted to take the exam. I was very, very lucky again. Life is always that you have to take choices and sometimes you say, "I'm lucky because I get this," sometimes you are not lucky because you got this or you're lucky because you didn't get it. You think that a thing is the best for you probably, sometimes it is not, so you don't get it and you say, "Oh, it's terrible.” No it is not, don't worry. In this case I was lucky again. People have more points than me and they had passed the exams same as I had. They have not asked for the places that I had, and that year I could choose between a position as educational adviser or a teacher. This does not teach direct to children but coordinates programs related to teaching children. I had a choice of London in United Kingdom and Rome in Italy. I decided that Rome in Italy was more challenging that very moment. Fortunately I
decided that, because for the other one I didn't have the points. I didn't have the marks for
the one that I had chosen, but the three people who were above me chose Rome as a
second or the third option. They got their positions somewhere else, one in Brussels, the
other one in Paris. Then that position arrived to me and they said, "Okay, this is your
chance to go to Rome!" I went to Rome and I had been studying Italian. I thought that my
Italian was good enough to live in Italy. I found out immediately that it wasn't. In fact it's
interesting because American people when they go to Rome they speak to the Italians in
Spanish and they are able to understand each other. I think that's great. Now, I arrive in
Rome but it is different. I was able to do my job and do what I wanted to do but it was
harder. My position was collaborating and coordinating programs for the department of
education of Spain and the department of education of Italy. In the Ministry of Education
there were different programs that same as this program here for visiting teachers in the
United States. There is a program there where high school students in Italy follow a
pattern in which they have a lot of Spanish. Some of the teachers come from Spain and
some are Italian. I was coordinating the Spanish teachers already living in Italy with the
education office of the embassy of Spain. I did this in Rome for five years. That was a
fantastic experience and I learned a lot. I realized that the direct teaching is fantastic, but
sometimes you need to go away from that, you need to look at it from a different
perspective. You need to forget that you are part of the system and say, "No, I'm not here
now. I have to see what is good and what is wrong." You can contrast and compare that,
and then when you come back to the classroom it's great because you have seen so many
things, and then you can decide what you would like your classroom to be. I think that
I'm a better teacher now than I was before being out of the teaching system for those five
years. I was able to work with so many people and train teachers, so I learned a lot. There are so many opportunities collaborating between the Spanish embassy and the Italian government, and you learn from other Latin-American countries like Mexico and Guatemala. I had the opportunity of getting in touch with many different perspectives. It's fun because the Italians think that Italians and Spaniards are similar, they are not. We are all Mediterranean, but neighbors probably are not the best friends. I don't know why, but it happens everywhere, Spain with Portugal and France don't have this. I mean, they it's not that you are not getting along well with each other, but it's like France saying the German side is too strict, you know, that is much the image of the Germans. In Germany you cannot be late for one minute. Italians have nothing to do with that and it's the other way around. If you have an important appointment, even with important people, at twelve o'clock in the morning that appointment probably will start at one o'clock. Italians and Spaniards are much more alike than Italians and Germans or Italians and French. I think that there was a very, very good feeling between Italian people and Spanish people. Cultural proximity causes so many kids in Italy to study Spanish. Politics and the Italian education system decided that all kids in the secondary levels have to learn at least two European languages. All the kids learn English, of course that's in everywhere in Europe. In the secondary levels they choose the second language. Many of them choose French but some choose German for working reasons. I mean, it's much more likely that a German company will hire you if you speak German. Many kids want to learn Spanish because it's the easy subject.

Rome is a marvelous city and experiencing living in new places is incredible even when it is hard. You could get lost in Rome and not be found for three years just walking.
I still don't know anything about Rome. The streets are so small and you find a new building and say, "may I get that patio there?" Then you find the statues and fountains that are amazing everywhere. Rome is just a museum and it's very difficult to live in a museum. The Italian character is very different from the north to the south, and what is in the middle is a mix of both, so it's an interesting. I've learned so much from Italians, the best things and those things that perhaps are not the best. Rome is complete chaos, you cannot drive in Rome. I lost my car in Rome. I had an accident in Rome and I decided that I didn't want to drive anymore, so I hired a car because I decided that my car wouldn't be in that town anymore. Living in Rome is very difficult for everyday living because you have to use the public transport. Public transport doesn’t work except in common tourist areas.

When you walk on a Sunday on a sunny day it’s an idyllic image that you have from Italy and Tuscany. I walked from my home to the office many, many times across the Tiber River. There was a moment where my wife and me could have the same schedules more or less, and then we were together at this café having Macchiato coffee together in the morning before starting to work. It was an incredible experience working in Rome. Then when you had to take the kids to school, or when you have to do whatever administrative, bureaucratic task that you have to accomplish in your everyday life, it was so awful. For five years we arrive at the same time and we left at the same time, because you cannot do something new. You cannot do something different or wrong because you cannot do two things in the same morning and get your work done. You just have to say I have to go to this meeting at ten o'clock in the morning, and forget about anything else unless it can be done five or six o'clock, because you will not be able to do
it. You live in one of the most wonderful cities in the world and have to say, "How do I do this?" You cannot move, you cannot, and you get so stressed for everyday life. The Romans who live in Rome, they are so stressed, and it's just because of two million vehicles in Rome. There is a huge difference between Rome and here. Here are these trucks and when we arrive all Spaniards say, "We don't want the automatic transmission we want the manual transmission and a small car.” You are asked, “Why do you want a small car?” Well in Rome it had to be smaller so that you can park. You park wherever you can put in one meter and a half. I mean those small cars look like a ball and there are thousands of those and two million motorcycles.

I cannot say that Spaniards are more organized than Italians or Texans but Madrid has a public transportation service. Madrid is a huge city and you can arrive to any point of Madrid in less than one hour. I could go to work or do anything from the suburbs to the center of Madrid in twenty-five minutes. In Rome I needed forty-five minutes and here there is no public transportation at all. The first thing I realized when I arrived here was that I need two cars, one for me and one for my family.

I came from the experience in Rome and we thought about this visitor teacher's program but we have never felt prepared for it. We didn't know what it meant, and thought it was such a huge distance. From Madrid to Rome is two hours of flight or we could drive. One summer we wanted to see everything and we decided to take a car. We arrived from Rome to Madrid like in seventy-two hours. You can do it in less but we took in the scenes and stops because it is beautiful to see.

**Family Decisions**

We felt ready, as a family, and it was a family decision. The decision of move to Italy was my wife's and me. I talked to her and I said, "Look, if we decide to go to this
place and I get the position, we have to go. You cannot say no because you will not have another opportunity like this." So I will say, "We go ahead, we have to be there and it doesn't work, we go back, but we have to go." The children didn't count and couldn’t decide in that very moment. Now when that adventure is finished, I realize I put my family to in great stress. Leaving and moving all your family to a different country where language that is not their own is a powerful stress. Even when you're going there in the best of the conditions you are not an immigrant. You are going for good job and a good income but it's very, very difficult. My kids studied in Italy to the Spanish school. There's a Spanish school and they actually studied with a Spanish education system in Rome. It was simply different because all the kids there spoke Italian although the classes were in Spanish. Their social interaction was Italian, not Spanish, and they had to get used to the language. They had to start interacting with them in Italian immediately. When you make these decisions you sometimes don’t realize what you are asking your family to live through.

![Family Experience](image)

*Figure 6. Family Experience.*
Deciding on America

After the time in Rome we felt ready to come here. We had been able to go through that experience successfully as a family, quite successfully. So we said perhaps now is the moment to try to go. I have two children but they are not children anymore. The oldest, he will be 18 next month, and the other one is 13, so this time they are a part of the decision to come to the United States.

There are lots of people who asked for these positions in Spain. There are six or seven times the amount of teachers trying to come to America than who really actually come. It's not guaranteed that you are going to get it and it’s very competitive. Many of them do not know why they are coming. Many of them do not know actually what it represents. Many of them are attracted because America is America. America is the first country in the world so it’s attractive. They say, "Okay, I want to be there, I want to be a part of it. I want to know it. I want to live it." In the last years there is actually economic crisis in Spain pulling many that were working. People who were working there on a regular basis have stopped working. They don’t have the chance to work on a regular basis, so they feel compelled to look for other options outside of Spain. That is not why I decide to come here. We hope that this crisis is starting to slow down since some things are getting better. We decided to go ahead and come and spoke as a family in December. In that moment we said, "Let's go try to do this as a family."

Then I have this interview with the district to see what we can do there. We chose Texas above all because there were more positions. We had thoughts about other places, but we always thought about the south of United States, not necessarily Texas. We thought about like California, Texas, and Florida. We thought about different possibility
but there were more positions in Texas. We have to go statistically where there are more possibilities of getting in.

You didn't know whether you were going to be having your interview for Texas. In fact, you can only choose one state. There are so many states participating in this thing, each one with its own characteristics asking for different profiles. In Texas I found that they were looking for elementary teachers that have my profile as an elementary teacher. I have been those years, out of the direct teaching. I felt that it would be a good transition instead of going back to my secondary levels. I was more encouraged from the point of view. I thought going back to the secondary level would be more complicated after five years out of direct teaching. I felt more comfortable going back to primary levels. If I come back to Spain, I cannot decide which level I would be teaching. I have to go back to the last position that I was working. I cannot say what made us as a family to take this decision, but once again I was lucky.

**Recruiting Interview**

I was selected for Texas. I was thinking about towns about and cities that you have heard of before. I have heard of here as well of course, and I like so much. There were so many things we like and all of them were here. There was also a person who decided that my profile was for the interviews here. They tried to put together the people who came from further distances and I came from Rome. I was one of the people who came for an interview on Monday. It is a good day because my last name starts with an A. I was the second person interviewed. I think that all of the things I had was what the person who was interviewing with wanted. She was very precise when she wanted to
know something. The interview had to be good, and they found my profile could fit with what they are looking in the position.

Moving to America

When we decided to go to Italy we went altogether. We were altogether from the beginning. We took our car and we filled it with lots of things saying, "Okay, we will be moving more things when we are there, but now we need to live there for like a month or something." We went on holidays on Spain with our car full of this stuff. We went and arrived altogether. I realized that coming here in the same conditions would not be suitable for a family. I decided to come first and let them have their summer. They could have a complete summer, enjoy and relax, and meet their friends that they have not been meeting for five years in Spain. We only went there one summer, and I wanted them to have plenty of time to take care of all the people that they knew and met. They did a fantastic job because they were able to see everybody in a month and a half, and that was really good for the transition for them.

For me it was very, very difficult. I had to stay in Rome until August 31st but I had my holidays. I manage to resign fifteen days before I had to leave. I was very fortunate because the person in charge in the office said, "Okay this is an adventure. This is your adventure, let's go for it, let’s do our best." The person who was with me said, "No worries, I will take care of the office in August and you can leave." All these things together meant I could be with my family. We were in Rome July the fourth and left Rome July the tenth. I was here on July 16th so I was in Madrid and did not have time for everything. One of my brothers was in for holidays during that period and I didn't even see him. I had seen him the summer before and I didn't see him again for two years.
I arrived in Madrid and we had to sell a lot of things in those five days. It was very, very intense in Madrid. I wanted to at least see all the people that I could because the next Monday I was moving here. I came here and knew no one. I didn't even know the people who were coming with me. In a sense they were much more together because they have been working from Spain and I was not in Spain. Some of them had decided to come here together. In fact, some of them have been sharing and all knew a lot of things. I didn’t know anything!

My family we had email. We communicated with each other, and we were preparing things together, but I was out of that group and they decided to be hostile. I decided that no, I wouldn't be in that hostile. My personal decision was to move to a hotel. It was an extended stay hotel so I was spared from them. In the beginning and I didn't know if I would match well with them. In a sense, however, I have to say that the group of people who came last year are wonderful, but I don't know them so good. All of them are supportive.

I don't know how to say or who to tell that Genoveva is one of the best persons I've ever met. She was able to have all of our agendas in her head. It’s incredible, just incredible. You have to go everywhere and you worry, but with Genoveva you don't worry because she has this car hired and they will go and pick you up, and then you'll go everywhere you need to go. Without that it would have been so different. This landing here with this person was making a huge difference. I'm sure regarding all the other people in other places too. I have to say that the district in this case probably knew who the right person was for the job. Genoveva is incredible and she's still a friend. We thank her. We have a joke of Saint Genoveva de Texas. Saint because we wrote thousands of
things for nominating to the pope in Rome saying that she was able to maintain ninety-five people. In the beginning we used her address for everything. It was the most populated house for fifteen days when we were putting together all the things that she was doing for us.

She has that on the wall in her house. The canonization is a person's when she is dead. We said, but alive please. It was a joke but she was incredible. So we had lot of chances to be together, and so much supportive, and for me it was fantastic because a month and a half more or less here without my family.

**Family Arrives**

My family arrived August 25th, and on August 26th I started school. I went to pick them up from the airport and we had dinner together that day, and then we all went to bed because they had terrible jetlag and I had to be up so early and go to work. Everybody was very worried about finding a place to live, but I wanted to find something good enough for my family so it took me a little longer. I wanted to verify that the place I was going to bring them to was nice enough for them to live in, always taking into account what I could afford. I was putting together all those things with a seven hour difference. I call them every morning when I woke up at like five or six o’clock. It was one o’clock pm there so I did not interfere too much with them. I say, “I'm thinking about going to this place and I'm sending you this information.” I didn't have a very good internet access in that moment because I didn't have my home. I was using my cellphone or the hotel internet to say, "Do you like this? Do you like that?” They didn't have a very good internet access either because our house had been closed for five years. We didn't have a telephone line, they had to look for places where they could connect to the internet to see
the things that I sent them. They always said, "but we trust you" and I said, "but you don't have to trust me." It’s a great responsibility for me if your wife isn’t here, just say, "What is this, this stinks." It was very stressful for me and above all because I have never been a month and a half away from my family, never. We had traveled a lot when I was in Italy, and I could be out for a week or for a couple of days. A month and a half was a huge period. I was taking care of all these things at the same time trying while trying to catch up with the training of the district. All while getting used to all the things here like all the vocabulary words that I completely have nothing to do with, and none of the things that you're used to in your life.

**Teaching in America**

I have been teaching for twenty-three years and I have been training teachers. My first year here I felt like, brand new. The management of the classroom and even with language was like riding a bicycle, you'd never forget. I didn't have that problem, but I have all the rest of the problems. The things that came like self-contained, having to do everything, and the strict schedules that are in the classroom here were so different. The schedules in Spain are completely different. You can choose. You can have two hours of this and the following day have all those hours together. You had to catch up with that thinking and then get ready for the first day the kids are going to be here. I said, ”Am I going to be able to do all the things that they are expecting?” The kids, the district, and their principal are expecting from me so much, but my family came yesterday and I have to go home quickly. They have to get ready too, and they don't even have a car. We only have one car, so they were prisoners in their own house, because they could not even go by foot. It was little bit stressful.
Italy was a huge experience, and I had that experience living here too that month and a half. I am leaving all things for the opportunity of working and meeting all these fantastic people. Many of the teachers that came didn't have their partners here or were in the same situation. I think that that created an atmosphere from the personal point of view to be with a group of people supportive with each other. I don't know what would have happened without that support. One of the teachers had the problem with her boyfriend in London, and she went London to visit the boyfriend to say goodbye before she moved here. She had an accident and broke her clavicle. She arrived twenty days late and had to catch up with all these things. I think that the whole group was able also to support her all together. We said, “We're going to do it, we are going to find an apartment, get your social security number, and you will get everything you need.” She thought maybe she would have to leave but she’s here and doing great. I've heard about it 40 percent of the people leave after the first year, however, the group that came that year so far all but two are still here.

**And the Differences Are**

Everything. Everything here is different. We always say that perhaps it’s not here, it’s not there, it’s somewhere in the middle. Teachers have many possibilities of doing what they want to in their classrooms and no one can say, "No! You have to do this or that." That is a problem here. Some people would dream certain things, but because all of the curriculum and schedules are so defined that you have a very small margin to maneuver to decide what you want to do. In Spanish primary school a teacher would arrived at 9 o'clock in the morning. Then you begin with the core subjects because at the beginning morning is when kids start more or less fresh, and then you benefit from those
two hours of higher attention span. Then you decide on Monday I will take this first two hours for language, on Tuesdays for Math, and so on. Here we same schedule every single day and that's a huge difference. There you can take things in a different way, plan different activities, and different theories. You can interrupt, or you can continue working on something. Here they are smoothly riding on the activity that you want them to bond and you say, “Stop!” The flowing, the flowing, the flowing is so important. The way the teachers are evaluated here is not completely different. I've learned so many things especially classroom management and behavior expectations. I like the respect for the figure of the teacher, for work, and the respect for the child and their families. I feel much more comfortable with all that here than in Spain. There are other points on which we differ so much. We’re trained to create a group of collaborative people to put all these things together; I think perhaps we can share it with the schools here.

We are trained to do this or that when we are used to do what we are doing there. People who may come in the future might tell things from their cultural point of view and cultural background. We tend to see something that is different and say, "Look at what they're doing." Then they say, "We want to do it instead this way.” We should forget about the differences and just put them together and make people see differences, good and bad.

**Cultural Fronts**

People are mostly not aware that when you move to a different country there are so many cultural differences. You have to be very, very open minded. When you arrived from another country you have to look at things from their perspective. If you always see
things from your cultural perspective you will always say, “They are mad.” You may say, "What are they doing?” or, That's absurd!” That’s what sometimes happens.

I've known a lot of people and they telling they love people in here, love people everywhere, but only they point out things that are differences. They were in Italy but Italy was not in them. You are in the country but the country is not in you, so you're like a mile in the other country. You’re trying to move with all this background and you're trying to figure out all the things from your own perspective. You will be wrong, you will always be wrong. You need to take your glasses up and say, "Let’s look at things from this different perspective." I'm not going to judge from the beginning, saying, "What they're doing is wrong!" I will say, “What they are doing is different and try and learn the things that perhaps are positive and from the things you think are negative.” Then you take the best fit. That is difficult because of our cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and religion. We think stupid simple things because of our everyday life.

Everything changes in your life when you come here and you say, "What am I doing!?” You have to be prepared and say, "Okay, this is different, but it’s ok." We are always talking about Western and Eastern countries probably being different. I’d probably like to stay a little bit longer but it’s a difficult decision. The first year that you had been doing something probably you are not the best doing that so it’s a learning process. You just say "Okay, we know that you will not be the best one at this job this year but the second year you should be doing better.” What I was doing in Italy the first year probably I was lost. It’s messy and you want to be productive from the first moment, and they expect you to be meeting expectations.
The second year you are able to manage things much better but you don't have the confidence. You have completed a couple of cycles and know what you are doing. Only three years is not productive from that point of view because you could be able to do many, many other things if your mind would be projected to the future saying, "Next year, I will continue one more." I understand that the program has its limitations, in this case between Spain and the United States. It would be better if someone found a window of ten years or at least five years to be here teaching. You would be able to be productive for at least two or three years. Your perspective towards the future is always, "We could do, we could do, we could do, we could do if." Would I continue doing this my whole life? I like being engaged in learning different things. I would like to expand that period to feel more productive. I think I can give more things if I may be able to live a little here a bit longer. On the other hand we have the family issues. For my younger son it would be fantastic. I would like him to finish his high school here. For the older one, who is a senior this year, we have the difficulties of the university system here. It is three times more complex if you come from outside and have a visa. It’s already three times more expensive, which is perhaps logical because you have not been paying taxes here for twenty years. We are going to stay next year because I want have at least three years. He’s not going to start his college because it represents very, very complex charts on the economy of the family. I could try, but is it worthwhile that I spend twenty-five thousand dollars for first year for college? We can try and get and spend some money in preparing him for that vocational training that he would be taking anyway before studying his college. Then we have to decide what we will do.
I wanted to participate in experience. I wanted to see how it worked. I always had this question in my mind. "Well, once you move, if you like it, is it possible to stay?"

There are limitations of this program, but also people who studied here and now have been here for fifteen years. I learned a few years ago before going to Italy, because some personal experiences that I you never know what's going to happen tomorrow. You know that you are leaving your home in the morning, but you don't know what's happening when you're going back in the evening. That’s not sad, it's life. When I get out of my home I always worried about saying two things-first I'm not upset with anyone, and the second is say goodbye to everyone in the family. You have to take things as they come, but be prepared and plan for the future. Fight for your future, do the things that you have to do for the things that you want, but be prepared to change your plans if things don't come the way you would like.
VI:  PORTRAIT OF PAQUITA: “FREE”

Paquita begins her story with the words “I love to teach”. Her enthusiasm for teaching was apparent throughout this process with the research team. But like so many teachers I see from Spain she struggles with family and work. This is the hardest thing for teachers who come here to navigate. Paquita had several years of teaching in Spain and France prior to coming to the United States, but the teaching experience in Texas was difficult for her. She became pregnant shortly after arriving here, and found the hours away from her small child and her family in Spain very challenging while trying to adjust to her teaching position. She longed for the freedom from long work hours and the independence to teach that she had in her homeland of Spain. She gave a heartfelt description of the transnational cultural barriers that ultimately drove her to leave after her first year as a transnational teacher. As Paquita shared her stories she was visibly stressed and emotional. She would pause throughout the narrative to collect her thoughts and compose herself.

*Plática of Paquita*

*Figure 7. Paquita and Son.*
Teaching

I love to teach and that’s why I came over here to learn. My name is Paquita. I’m from South Spain and I've been working as a teacher in my country for the last six years. Before teaching there I have been just traveling around the world a lot and working at different things. I was a teacher assistant in France, in French Guiana, and I have also been teaching Spanish for like French speakers in France. In my country of origin I’m a high school teacher. The differences are very much bigger here for the teachers. When I tell people here about the work in Spain they don’t believe me that I only work, teach, like 18 hours per week. That’s it. Sometimes they ask me, “A day?” or, “How?” I cannot be teaching 18 hours per day. I say per week. With the crisis in Spain I increase the hours a little bit, so now maybe I'm teaching twenty hours.

I have to be like three hours more in case there is a teacher that is absent. We don't call substitutes like here if you are absent for one day. They just called for other teachers. That is really part of the job. It really means a lot that you can be sick and you don’t have to be so upset about, “What is going to be doing with my students?”

Something that I missed a little bit is that I can change the group like eighteen hours with like ten different groups. Normally you don't spend more than two hours per week in high school. You don't get so familiar with the students like here, and that is very troublesome. If you only see them like two hours per week you can deal with that better.

I like here now because these are serviceable children. My problem with Spain was I didn't like teaching there, and I wanted to change a little bit for a while, because in my school we have almost three hundred students. I didn't get to learn by the end of the first term all their names. I could not get to Friday with my voice. My voice was lost and
it was really frustrating, because if you are teaching languages like I do here. I teach French, so you are going to teach language with over forty people in the classroom. It wasn’t always like that, but it was like that last year. I used to teach in a very small school before two years ago. Now when I am planning to come back, I’m coming back to a school that is smaller. You don’t get so busy with the planning because two hours is so easy to plan. Here one of the things that gets me like very upset is I have to plan for the whole week for all of the subjects, and it is too much. Like how can I do that? Why they don’t do it for me? They tell me everything else to do and not to do. I can’t do what I want and still they tell me to plan everything.

**Quality Time**

Another thing I miss from my country is to come back home having lunch with my family. One of the only things that I could remember is like people in the Spain, come back home at three to their family. We have a little nap. We have a little wake time. Even if I have to check exams or something, we don’t work there in the evening or in the afternoon. At two or three o’clock everything is done, and you just eat and rest. Most of the shops they close too, for having lunch at home and having a rest. Well, you just don’t have to work the whole time like you do here. You work like from ten to two if you are in a shop. Then you open again at five and you close at eight.

In Spain you get some family life too, you know. Like children come back from school, and they have the parents at home that cook for them. They have that middle time with them. That is one of the things that I miss a little bit. When I get home from here it is like almost the day is gone for me, you know? Like I get home at five and say “Oh, I
am too tired now to be like sitting with my family and having a chat because I've been working all day.”

Quality of Life

I like very simple things. I have a very luscious life where I live, but when I got here I miss quite a lot of my life. I find that my life is quite more miserable. In daily life spending time with my family and time spent cooking. In like time you can plan for your own life. I've been living in other countries. I've been living in France. I've been living in England. I've been living in Belgium. In all these places living, I never had that feeling that I've not taking enough time for myself and my family. I've always been a very busy person. I will be like studying, working at the same time, doing a lot of stuff, but not that feeling that I don’t have time for myself. I do have that feeling here most of the time.

![Walking at the Beach](image)

**Figure 8. Walking at the Beach.**

It’s the Job

It is the job. It is the job because first you’re not ready to work like all this much. You've been told, “Oh, they work a lot in there.” You kind of figure out how hard it’s going to be, but you don’t know it is going to be like working like this. Many different things like how higher are the expectations. They want you to be working and at the same
greeting. I don’t think that oh, you come from Spain, you’ll going work less than someone who has been working here for twenty years or someone that has been here all their lives. No, I mean, just understand that I’m going take my time to get used to the differences and the time of work. Maybe the first year is not going to be a smooth performance because I need to get used to it. I’d really have the feeling that I don’t want to disappoint anyone but I can’t. It is like, okay look, even if I spend twelve hours a day in my school, I think that I cannot get there. It is too much. It is too much at the same time. The work is like everything is coming at the same time. I’ve haven’t been here forever, and I do have the feeling that I needed time to adjust. Maybe a couple of months will be enough, but people make a difference too, and I never had time because of the people.

If You Came to Spain

    I think it is the same for an American that would come to Spain. You have to get used to all the different things. Like maybe that in their high schools they are not so quiet. Here is different to have such things because it is more silent here. You wish here people are shouting. You really can get various meaning. Here someone should help you just move a bit, a little bit, and say, “Look, don’t get upset if they are shouting.” You just have to briefly let them shout, and then they will hear to you, but you cannot be in a Spanish class where everybody is quiet.

Freedom of Teaching

    It feels that you’re failing. In Spain you have to be very independent. No one’s going to tell you, you have to do this, you have to do that. The people in America can be very hard to get there to this independence. You are to be working on your own all the
time. For me, it is very hard to get here and people telling me what to do every time. I was very mad at the beginning. I want to learn but I don’t want you to be manipulating. I don’t want to feel like a puppet. I can make my own decisions when you hire me. If you didn't trust me, my own criteria, my own professional point of view of the things, why am I going to be here. Why you have to tell me all the time what to do? That is something that you have to get used to. It’s not is the wrong and it’s not right. I do think it’s easier for me there. It’s just different here and you have to take a little time to adjust.

**First Three Months**

The first three months were really a nightmare. Everybody told me the stress will get down from the peak when you get November. Thanksgiving, they told me, will be better. What is Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving is so far. Downhill they say. I don’t feel like this downhill anymore in November. I mean it’s not much better. It wasn't much better after even Christmas and spring break. I still have the same work, and problems you know?

**Hard on the Family**

I miss my family. I miss to speak to them. The first thing is I don’t think it is easy for here to be a mother. You’ll miss your child a lot because he will spend more time at the daycare than at home. The daycares are so expensive that you want to find a good one, but you don’t trust any because one is like nine hundred dollars and the other one is five hundred. You don’t trust the one that’s five hundred. You want the one that’s nine hundred because you want the best for child, but it is too much to spend. In Spain I used to be split from my child because I work only twenty or twenty-five hours per week out of the home. I’m very attached to him and I miss him a lot. I do meet him when I get
home, but I get a feeling that I am not there for him and for my husband too. Our schedules were very hard, and when he was working we didn't see each other for a while. He had to quit because the thing is we have no time together as a family. I don’t want criticize or sound like, “Hey, these guys don’t understand family.” It’s just that here family has to come after work, and I am having a hard time with that.

**Personal Days in Spain**

There are really things that make me like very, very mad. When I absent in Spain because my child is very sick, I have a report from the doctor saying he is sick. Then we take these days like personal leave. It is not personal but this is family. It is something that is more important than a job. Here they don’t respect too much if you are sick. If you are sick you cannot be sick for more than four days per academic year. In Spain if it is your child who is sick, or you are, it is your duty. So we call it like, how you say it? Like a duty that you cannot deny because it is your child. No one else is in charge to him but you, so you are not going be taking days for yourself, it’s because you are taking care of your child. This is called reconciliation of family lives or something like that. We think that that is a right, but when you come here, it is not a right. Now I am pregnant and no one will take care of my child the first months of their life. I learned that I only can spend no more than three months, or maybe less, because you have maternity leave only for six weeks. Then you have to take health family care or health family leave, something like that? You can apply but maybe they will say no. I don’t know how it works, but really you cannot have more than three months breastfeeding your child, and having like full time for your child. That really is very shocking for me because one of the reason why I became a teacher was for these times with my family, and that is something that was very
weird because it is not the conditions for teachers in Spain. No one wants to be a teacher in Spain because people know that teenagers are hard to teach. The high schools are a jungle now. No one wants to be in charge of so many children at the same time. It’s a big responsibility and you have to have a very big formation, very big you know. You have to establish it all your life and then you’re going get a teaching job. It is not like a dream job of anyone. Some of them would say, “I want to be a teacher because it is a vocation.”

I wanted to be a teacher because to have a family, and because I know that when you are teaching in Spain you can have a family. You can spend time with your family. You have so many rights. If you will want be a mother, you can have like almost six month on maternity leave. They will pay you the same and you will not be told, “Oh, look at this woman that is not working.” No, I’m working; I am working at home with my child. They know I am working as soon as I finish my maternity leave. I will be back to job like full time, but I need that time to adjust myself to my newborn. You know, it is something that just, like, well, changes your life a lot.

**Leaving the Program Early**

That is one of the reasons that I have decided to quit the program. I was so happy that I was already getting better and good. My students are improving in reading and are better in the classroom. I feel that I am not giving or taking back the things that I deserve. My husband has to quit his job because one of us has to keep him my child at home. You cannot send him to the day care sick like many people do. He got pneumonia twice because they keep on sending the children with pneumonia to the school, and I don’t have any place to send him. You also need to get paid. If you take days and then you can’t pay the nine hundred dollars. Another thing is that I get a lot of help in Spain because I
maybe am moving up to live not quite so far from my family. I know it’s only he and me, but my salary it’s not as big as here. My salary in Spain, we can easily live together and pay for retreats, all the bills, rental, and everything with only one salary. We really get well paid in there. Here I have, well, more money, but I need much more money here too, because the cost of living difference is huge.

**Money, Money, Money**

I cannot do any savings at all. Since I arrived here, I spend money, money, money you know? You have to buy cars and rental here is crazy. I don’t know if you live in here but I was looking for a house for a long time. It was so expensive and I don’t get much help. If you cannot pay your rent, it is not like an option just to go to another place. Maybe you can’t go very far because you don’t want to be driving all day. Anyway, I don’t like cars so much.

![Figure 9. Hill Country.](image)

**Take a Walk**

I miss just to go for a walk. Just to go for walk is something that I used to do every day. Every single day I just go for a walk. That is a way you can just relax. I used to relax, but here now I can only go to a grave or a playground. There are not so many places to go have a walk or to go cycling. I would like to go cycling here to work. That is
something that would help me, like relaxing out a little bit. Going to and from work
cycling, you know? You can’t here because there are dangers. People here don't respect
bicycles and there are not so many bicycles. There are not so many places in this world
here to drive your bicycle. So that’s one of the things that I miss a lot. It is the very
simple things that maybe people think are very silly that I miss. Maybe they sound very
silly, but I tell you there were a couple of Spanish people that quit the program here too,
because they could not go by bike anywhere. They were used to use their bikes like I am.
Well, it's the little things really like that I miss and make me feel sad.

**Keeps Me Here**

The only thing that really kept me here even for one year is the feeling that I am
learning a lot. My child is learning English and my husband is having the chance to meet
new things that we don’t have in Spain. We do like these beautiful parks you have in
here. In Spain they are older. We miss the daily life routines like having a breakfast
outdoors. I don’t know why it is so expensive here. There we eat breakfast everyday out.
It is very weird that I have breakfast at home here. I am feeling like a freak. We like
having breakfast very cheaper and life outdoors. Here maybe only the fast food is very
cheap, but I don’t want to feed myself with fast food now that I am pregnant, or really
ever. In Spain I am also like having them say, “Hey, let’s meet for having a coffee
together”, and you meet people because everything is closer, you know? You can walk
and just meet people. That’s the things that you miss a little bit.

**Recruited for Tennessee**

The first time I came here was for my interview. It was because I didn't have the
chance to work as teacher in Spain. It is really hard there because you have to pass
exams. I came here first and was hired for Tennessee. I have to refuse to come, because
then I got hired for another job in France. My second language is French, and I was really
eager to be keeping my French clean and fresh, you know? I have a degree in English and
in French, but French, well, was my priority since I always wanted to become a French
teacher. Not because I didn't like to become an English teacher, but there are so many
people that are speaking English in Spain. French was like opening much more doors. I
know they choose me in the interview, but I am not going be working in the United States
yet, because I was also told that place where I was going be living in Tennessee, that they
didn't like people like me.

It was a little town. It was hard to find it in Google Map because it was so tiny.
There was a Spanish visitor up there, and I had the chance to be in touch with her. She
told me, “Don’t dare to tell them that you going come here from Spain and you’re not
married. No one is going rent you a house if they are seeing something like that. They are
being religious.” They are very religious there, and we are not so much religious in Spain.
We don’t even care about getting married. It’s just something like legal. For coming here
we can get married so they can stay here with us on a visa. We just got married before
coming here. It was easy for us but I didn't want to get married at that time when I was
twenty-five, but I’m alright with it now.

Time for a Change in Canada

After a few years I had the chance to work in Spain. I got tired of working in
Spain because I am always used to travel. I was like I'm doing all the time the same thing,
and I want to change. I want to learn new things, and I want to improve my English now
that my French is so perfect. English has always been there, but I mix it up a lot with
French since I spoke French like almost all the time. I decided to try to come here, but the first two years I was trying to go to Canada. They told me the Social Security System, maternity leave, and their rights for people in general were much better in Canada than in the United States. Everybody, when I told them it was my third year trying to get a position in the United States, told me they thought I was crazy. They also say they don’t have security system, they don’t have hospitals, so how are you going to be living there. We do have a very bad conception of people here. They thought like I was going to be in the streets with nowhere to be living and with no Social Security. The thing is you really get the feeling that here the rights for people and workers are not very good. We think if you are a woman you are in a disadvantage here. People they don’t like it too much, but my husband was like, “Look, if we don’t do it now when our child is very young you will not be doing it ever.” He wanted to learn English. My child was like starting to speak a little bit with me in English. We decided when I was hired it was a big, big opportunity for all of us. I also wanted to learn something new. I don’t like to be in my job like for a long time. I used to be in the same city for a long time, but since I am nineteen I’ve been going and coming for years.

**Why Be a Teacher**

I think one of the reasons why I became a teacher is because I love to learn. I cannot be alright if I am not learning new things, I feel I am losing my time. I need to learn new things all the time. Sometimes when I get the feeling I know a place very well, I don't feel myself with new stuff, and feel like quite empty for a while. I feel I need the change all the time, and that is going to always be hard for me and for my child, but that what keeps me going. One of the things that gives me new energy is to be always
changing, because it fills me a lot. I know everything that I’m going to take home out
from this experience is positive, even if it is very hard now. I’m going be taking home to
my family things like: “How was the student?”, “What did you like doing?”, and “What
did you learn about teaching?”

**Teaching in Spain**

Teaching in other countries is awesome because our system needs to be improved
so much. I can take home so much from this system. We have the chance there to do
something in one way. We can do it without asking anybody. If want to make a word
book, now I can do it. I don't have to agree with anyone. I like in my country to hear new
speakers, new learners, new language learners, and foreign language learners. I used to
make like a little dictionary. I would write down the words and some of the things that I
learned. It is important to read, but here I can only have two hours per week to read. I like
putting aside a little bit to reading, and now, I have to work on that a lot. We try to work
on the oral, but how are you going to be working on oral with so many students. Every
single thing that I have learned here, and every single thing I have done here, I think I can
do it in there, in the way I like it. Every single thing that I can learn from another country
I can take it to mind. I think it will enrich myself and enrich my students there as well.
I'm going be doing what I have learned, you know, because we have a thing called
freedom of teaching.

**High School to Elementary**

I come from teaching high school. In high school, we think everything is harder. I
thought I was so happy that I was telling my students there "I'm going to work with three-
year-old children. I'm not going to miss you because you're old" and they were like,
"Huh, you're going work with little children?" I was, "Yes, I'm going to relax for year."

No! No! It's the other way.

When I come I asked my principal, "Can you show me a little bit of how to do this lesson plan so I can teach." We do ourselves a thing called lesson plans in the Spain. If you look at them, you can figure out what you're going be doing for the whole year. Here I quickly thought, “Wow, what a beautiful thing that they give you the plan.” I felt everything was done. I thought I just have to find my plans and go to my classroom. It's not like that because with many, many things you are confused and you think, "Oh look, they are bilingual, they can use big world languages,” but no they can’t. My principal, when she was introduced to me, she told me, "Maybe you have a special education student. How do you feel about that?" I said, "I don't think I can be with them." I mean, I feel very, very clumsy. I don't know how you say it, but very like not capable. I just told her, you know, "I don't think I can deal with that because I’m used to French learners. I mean, they're all almost in the same high level.” When you get a special education student, it's not really that. It makes a big difference at this age with the others, and it's really hard. I knew that, but I didn't know I was going be having a classroom with so many special education students. French is for higher student that they are going be studying for a degree or something. In high school I mean they're not supposed to be in French, because French is not for everyone.

She told me I would get help if I had problems with teaching Math and English. I'm sure I will have problems because it's not my first, second, or even my third language. At the beginning I felt very insecure by my English, and I still do. Sometimes, when I have to speak to students, I don't want to make mistakes because I know they're
learning from me. So, I try to speak very slow and learn by heart sometimes the things I'm going say, because I don't want to make mistakes. I don't have the academic vocabulary for Math either. I don't want to sound like, how you say, not knowing to my students. My profile was not really for what I teach here.

In Spain, language is better at this age. You have much more vocabulary normally, because you are with elder people like grandparents that take care of you or with your cousins. These students don't even know what a “sports” means. It's so hard for me to know you are now bilingual, because your English is not so good. You can maybe understand a little bit, but it's not like you are really bilingual. Then even the Spanish you don't know. Their Spanish is very low, and if you speak to the parents it's the same. They don't read, or maybe they don't have much education. We have more culture that we spend more time with other people. I don't know, but I feel that we do have more experiences with language. We have more vocabulary too, about people and things that we have learned. Here the social culture is very poor for these students. It's really hard to try to teach them how to read or comprehension because they don't have vocabulary. In pronunciation, they understand perfectly what I'm saying even if I speak fast. They're not trying to understand my accent at all. At the beginning of the year, I remember the first week I was talking about decent accent because they didn't know what accent means. I said, “Do you understand this accent?” and they were like, "I don't even feel a difference." Sometimes they did feel difference because they would say, “No, no, no we don't say that” and I would have a teacher assistant says how they do it in Mexico. I say, “Okay, sorry.” You know I respect that, but sometimes I have to ask her to make sure if it's a child mistake or it's just something that they say. Most of the times it's a child
mistake that they just confuse these two things because they are children. They are not exposed too much to new good expressions. Their parents sometimes speak very poorly like their children. Their English is not that good too. I guess, in their countries from origin, their education is much poorer. It's not just the money they have. It's also they have had not much school. I feel very rich for my education. I can give a lot to my students because I really have a very wide vocabulary. I can take my time to tell them "Look, this means this is important, because you need to know this because you need these words to read, and to understand what you're reading, or you would be lost." I think they, they are having more interest now in asking me such very simple things. Sometimes they ask me what something means in Spanish. All the books that we read here are in Latin, Latin-American, and Hispanic, not Spanish. It's not Spanish like in Spain. It's Spanish from here, and they don't know the very basic things in Spanish.

**Education**

I started my degree maybe fifteen years ago. All my life, I've been looking forward to when I would be learning English in Spain. I always had foreign teachers. I admired and trusted them, and they made me love the language. I always think like to become a teacher in one of my dreams, from the beginning. I started studying a degree, and thinking to go to a foreign country and teach people my language. It was about like five or four years, maybe even six from the beginning, when I was looking forward to work abroad. That was all of my dream. I realized I don't like my language as much as I love other people languages. So, I thought it's better for me if I teach my love. I share my love for French, German, Portuguese, or English. I teach all the languages to people so they love them too, and we can share that love. I get on very well with people. It was the
same when I met people from France that love to share their language with people from English backgrounds. I always wanted to be in a program in a foreign country just to have the experience, not to move out like from Spain forever. I do appreciate the life that I have in my country. I am lucky to experience other things here too.

**Husband**

When I met my husband I was already like a travel lover. You know, we didn't spend too much time together at the first years because I was always moving here or there. Then he started saying, "I want to go with you", and I said, "Okay, you can go. I don't care if I don't speak English at home. I'm in love with you, but the thing is not yet. I'm sharing my love of English." I guess it helps a lot too that he feels like this too, that it's cool to speak another language and learn new things. I think it's quite contagious. He was willing to come to other countries, and sometimes he wants to go to South America. We really like it there too, and we love to speak different languages. The only place in South America that we've been really attached to is Brazil. We love Brazil, but it's very hard to get a position in Brazil. I'm going to try to get it but I may have problems to go there. The good thing about this program is like in the other programs they ask you to pass an exam. In other programs the thing that you really need is to be very old and very experienced to get the points to get a job. It's like a contest. This program is good because if they like your interview and they like you, they hire you. It's not difficult for Canada either. I think I only didn't get my position there because I'm at high school and they were hiring people for primary. They start to have the interview there and saw my accent was so French they say, "Do you speak French?" I said, "Yes." They say, "Do you want your interview in French?" I said, "Yes please." I could not really find the words in English. I
used to have problems with that, and the thing is that in Canada they put me on like what they called reserve. They don't hire you, but if someone is not going, you will go in their place. I was like sad, but my husband told me, "Oh look, two years and you'd be reserve." That was like defeat to me, but I was going try a third time. Then my child got sick all the time that winter in Canada because it was cold, so I say, “No.”

**Coming to Texas**

They published like about two hundred positions for Texas. So, well, I thought maybe this is a chance to go, but what if it's true what people told me: "Oh the American culture is very, very hard for you because of this title of life.” They say they spend more time at work than at home. We know that, everybody in the Spain knows that about America. We know it because of the movies. We know people here work a lot of hours and it's the culture. You work more to have a lot of money, and you need the money to work more. It doesn't mean you want to work more, but you need to work more. Sometimes you don't but you just want more money.

**Gangs**

We were also scared of the gangs here. Don’t ask me why, but we think people here are all in gangs, and that can be dangerous, especially in Texas. We don't think Washington to be so dangerous. I was telling my husband when he wanted to go to California that there are many gangs in Los Angeles. I haven't seen a gang yet, and I hope I don't. I'm very scared of gangs. There are no gangs in Spain, just some people that are very mad and mean like criminals. If you're a policeman you have a gang. If you're a criminal you have gang. If you're normal, you don't have a gang. I mean, why are you
going to have a gang? You want to kill me, or what? So, we are really freaked out about the gang teams here in Texas.

Food

We also hear about the food here. We know here we don't get the healthy food. You do but you have to pay for it. Healthy food is expensive and people get really surprised when I tell them there's a place where they only sell organic. They say, “What? “In America?” I say, “Yes, but they're expensive, very expensive.” You have to look forward to good things and not very much. The way you eat at home you can have the chance to eat healthy every day.

Challenges

I guess they respect me a little bit in the way, but I'm not American. I do feel my school is like relaxed. I have met people from other schools in this program, and they have the principals coming and going all the time in the classroom. I could not go with that. I hate people coming to my classroom. I feel like they are spying on me because I've done something wrong. I have that feeling when anyone comes to my classroom or in my life. I am like, “Why are you coming here? What I am doing the wrong?” I feel very guilty and awkward. Here in this school, at the beginning of the year, I remember a little, how you say, confrontation with my principal, team leader, and almost all the school. I was like, “How do you want me to do this?” They had told us in the first week of school, “I want your plans to be done for the next two or three weeks.” I am like how am I going to be doing this? The team leader said, "You have any questions?" I said, "What do I have to do?” I mean, “What do you want me to do?” That my question is so big you cannot just be asking me to do this. You need to tell me something because I'm busy
preparing my classroom. I feel very, very mad at her. The other Spanish teacher that's been here a year told me, "Oh, you need to tell the principal. You need to tell her that your team leader is not supporting you." I was like, "But I will feel like a reporter." She told me, "Okay, but she was my team leader last year and she didn't help me at all. If you are not telling the principal right now that she's not helping you, you will be having a hard time all year." So, I told her in front of everybody in the first meeting we have "She's not helping me." I didn't say it with those words but I was saying, "I'm very lost, you know?" I remember that same day the team leader told me if we have any questions just ask. I was like, "I don't know even what to start doing. I don't know what you want me to do. What do I do?" The same day, she said, "Okay. Well, if you don't know how to it, try it at home." I wasn't just going to crash the computer because I don't know. I didn't even know where to start. She told me, "You have any doubt, tell me tomorrow. I didn't have a doubt, I just didn't know anything about what to do. My mate told me you have to tell me, because if you don't, you're going to hate me too. She had a hard time here when she arrived here too.

I didn't want to be the same. I know I was helpless, but I am not used to being like the one that he's asking for help. That day after the meeting, we have to meet with the team leader. The principal came to my classroom and she said, "Why are you in the meeting with your team leader? Why you're not planning?" I was like, "What do you want me to do?", and she was really accusing all the team that we were not working. I was working on my wall. Then I felt like all confrontation was with me, the new hired teacher. I didn't feel like no one was guiding me. She was really, really like mad at me at the very first moment, but then she got relaxed.
Let Me Eat

We had another confrontation because I wanted to eat. I said, "Look, I'm very busy today and it’s four, and my time to eat is three o’clock. Normally, I eat at three or half past three, and it's four. I'm really busy because I work up to very late. I need to eat something." I'm not used to eating in front of people, that's not my culture. I eat at home with the intimate in my family, how you say, in my private life. Eating is not something I do in front of other people. I don't know, it's something very weird to people here but it is my culture. She told me that I wasn't professional that I was saying I wanted to go the workroom. To me it wasn't professional for me to be eating in front of people while we are all talking. I explained to her and she got very mad at me because I just get up and went to eat. I felt dizzy and I having a big headache. It was too many things wrong and confusing. I said, “Okay well, I don't care.” I went to the rec room, ate, and then I came back. She said in front of everyone, "Why didn't you eat here?" I was embarrassed and told her, "I've never eaten before in front of people I'm working with, that's not my way. We always have a break to eat. I feel like I'm very, very rude if I'm speaking and munching.” She said, "No, no, here we eat all the time." I was like, "Okay." She told me that she wouldn’t mind if I ate, but I had to tell her. I said, "I felt dizzy and could not follow you anymore. I was just going to fall over something and I needed to eat." That was something that at first was hard for them to understand. If you don't give me a break when we've been there for a meeting for a long time, I didn’t know I would need to ask to eat. I didn’t even know when to eat here. I was dizzy, and how do you want me to explain that I have a headache, need to take a pill, need to eat or get a drink? That first week I also went to a dual language training. We were told that we would follow that training
and eat together too. That was a horrible week for me. To eat and work at the same time
was stressful. It really does make a difference. You don't get a rest. I was tired, and my
head was so big to be eating and hear people talking to me. I can't do it. I need to take a
break and eat, but here they are not used to people just eating and relaxing. You're not
even going have your time to eat.
VII. PORTRAIT OF DULCE CIERRA: “SWEET MOUNTAIN”

Dulce Cierra’s life is wrapped in challenges, decisions, and the love of a close family. She began her journey in the most rural areas of Venezuela. In order to provide his family with a better education her father moved them to Spain when Cierra was very young. School was very difficult for her, and she chose many careers before deciding to become a teacher. Cierra came to the United States not only to teach, but so that she could learn English.

Cierra’s journey has been hard because she expected to make friends. This is an expectation that we have when we come to the United States. We want to make friends, learn the language, and the culture. She has a very bubbly personality, but says that it has been almost impossible to make more than a couple of friends. The first few months she was here it was especially difficult because she came without any family. Dulce Cierra also lost her father, who was a strong influence in her life, and she wasn’t able to return home to be with her family during that time. Dulce Cierra, like many of us that come from other countries, is very resilient. She and her husband have chosen to make this experience about learning. They have chosen to embrace the differences in the two countries and cultures in order to grow during their experiences.
My Homelands

My name is Dulce Cierra, and I am from Spain. I was born in Venezuela. That is the south of America. My mom is from Venezuela, and my dad is from the north of Spain. They met in Venezuela, and me and my two brothers we were born in there. In my childhood I was there, and we went to like a private school, because Venezuela is a very dangerous country. More now than before, but it was dangerous then too. My father just took us to a private school because the public schools were horrible at that time. He wanted us to grow up like, I don't know, very educated in all things and have opportunities. In that country, if you don't go to the school, to the private school, you end up finishing in the streets. It’s a very different kind of life. Then when I was, I think, nine, we moved because my mom is from the Los Andes Mountains. These are huge mountains in Venezuela in the other part of the country. My mother's family is from there. They live like, in Spain, we say, like gypsies. They don't have running water, they don't have anything really. It’s like here, maybe long time ago with the natives. I don't
know, a long, long time ago. They’re still living like that now. They don't have money. It’s a very different culture. We were living in a town and we would visit my grandmother once or twice a year. They don't have bathrooms, and they wash themselves with the river water. I had a very good time there because I was a kid. If I go there now I will be like dying. I don't know. Then when I was like, I think, nine years old, we went to Galicia. That is in the north of Spain with my father because he wants us to grow up in Spain. That is our country.

In my family I have two brothers and one stepsister. My stepsister, I met her when I was nine. I met one of my brothers when I was nine as well, because he was living with my auntie. We were growing up separately, so it was like a kind of shock. My brother lives close to the capital now. He's living with his wife, and my sister is living in the same village.

We went to like a family house when I was nine and were living all together, like a long time ago. The mother, aunties, and uncles, we were like eight people in the same house. It was an old house, and it was like a farm with lots of animals. We were surrounded by animals. Me, I was like wild. I didn't go out with children, and I was always with the animals. My brothers didn't play with me because I was the only girl, so they were playing together, football or something. It was funny because I was just playing with the animals. I struggled a lot in the school. In Spain they asked for a lot of thing when you are a kid. In Venezuela they didn't. I didn't take all my school that seriously. I was thinking always that I wanted to feed the animals. I want to go for a walk or climb up to the tree. I thought when I was nine or ten to be working in the future with animals. I wanted to be a vet or to be a farmer. My parents told me, "No, no, farmer is not
a good option. You don't earn money, you have a schedule, you don't have free time and you're always working.” The experience that I remember when I was a child is to be then in a pig festival. One of the village neighbors killed our pigs in front of us. He was in charge of, how do you say, stirring the blood. He made pancakes made of blood. They're very good. First you blend with flour and sugar and then mix all of them together. You have to stir it because if the blood gets cold it becomes like thick and you can't eat it like that. You have to make it colder like stirring little by little. If it gets cold very quickly you cannot drink the blood. You can do it with milk or with blood. It’s typically in small villages because they didn't have too many resources, so they use all the things they have. The thing I remember is the pig crying, and I was very sad. Nobody's there next to him. I say, “Okay! He was dying.” You live with that like the same as the chicken. You were living with the small chicks, and then they grow up, and then you have to kill them to eat. We can’t care, we have to eat everything.

Moving to an Apartment

After high school we moved to an apartment. It was in a small village. My parents were always very strict with us so we couldn't go out. Maybe my brothers could, but not me. Not because it was dangerous, but because I was a girl. My father was very old and very old fashioned. He's was still old-fashioned. My mom just respects him be to like that. It's like I didn't go out until I was twenty or something. I envy you here from one part, but I don't from another. I really like the way I grew up. I spend like five years there in our apartment. My two brothers were living with me then, when before he was living with my auntie. Then they went to the same apartment as us.
The Rebel

When I was in high school I was a very rebel because my parents were so strict with me. I just wanted to be free to do things. I was like what a rebel is like. I didn't call home when I was late. I had arguments with them, I suppose like every teenager. I was like wanting to do many things that I couldn't do. Little by little, my brothers helped. He tried to tell my parents, "Come on! Just let her come with me and then go out." Little by little they did. It was very hard at that time, because my father from that time he was always sick. He had a problem with blood circulation thrombosis. He had a thrombosis in the leg and a year later in his lungs. Then, one or two years later, he had a thrombosis in his brain. It was every year that he was in the hospital again. We were very close, and it was very hard and scary for the family.

Religion

When I was small I was very, very religious. Then when I grew up, I just changed my mind. Now I believe in God, but I don't go to church. In Spain, all of us are Christian or Muslim. They don't have like here so many religions. There we have Christians and the others. A lot of people are from America and South America, so they are religious like us. Christian, Catholic, I think they're the same.
University

I decided to go to university in a very famous city, where all the pilgrims go there walking from France for their religion. One of my brothers went to study too. He rented an apartment and I was like, "Oh! I want to go there." That’s when I decided to be a teacher. I didn't decide to be a teacher at first. I wanted to be a lawyer. My oldest brother studied for a lawyer but my father said, "No! No! You cannot be a lawyer, we'll have too many." I say, “Okay, what can I do?” When you do a career in Spain you have to have good punctuation from all your records. All your subjects that you had to study before had to be good, and I didn't know that. I was very, not lazy, but I didn't like to study a lot. I was like the minimum in my punctuation. I couldn't be what I wanted to be. I also wanted to be a vet, but they asked for a high punctuation too, so I couldn't. The only option was to study another year to increase your job punctuation. I just say, "What can I do with this punctuation?" I went to be the special needs teacher. I am now a special education teacher and an English teacher. My English was the worst, so the only thing that I fail in the high school was English. My father said, “Okay! What do you want to do?” The special needs was poor so I couldn't enter. It was between special education and English, and I said, "Okay, English, Why not?" Then I just apply for the career and they got me. My English every year I was failing. I was very bad at that. My father was, "Why can you choose that, you are not good at English.” I just wanted to do something. In the last year I failed English and another subject, so I decided to become like a waiter. My father was very upset with me. He was paying all the things for me. So I say, "Okay! I work as a waiter.” That was worse for him because he's like a very old fashioned guy. He thinks that the waiter is like the worst thing for a girl. I don't know if you have here
fathers the same. I was working that one year, and I was studying for being a person that works in a plane as a stewardess. At one year, I was learning French and studying to finish my career when I realized that the plane was not for me. We were like doing practices and events I didn't like. I just went back and passed the two exams. I went as well to London for four months to learn English, and came back and passed my English exam.

When I decided to go back to the university, my parents moved with me from my village to the town where the university was, and again I didn't have freedom. I am the only girl, and they were like very protective. I was good and bad, but I finished my university and decided to become like a public teacher. You have to pass like an exam like a civil servant in Spain. You have employment from the state. There were not many positions in Galicia, so I just went to Madrid. There were many positions in Madrid. I was studying like morning, night, and evening. I was like getting crazy. For one year I didn't go out, I didn't eat, I didn't do anything. I passed all my exams. I told my parents, "Oh! I passed the exam, whatever!" They said, "Oh! We're going to buy you a car because it is the best news that we have from you."

Moving to Madrid

I moved to Madrid alone. It was very hard for me because I was very close to my family. Now I’m like all alone and it is very hard. In Madrid I think I do things that I didn't do when I was in the university. I was like, "Oh! I live alone. I can do things." The first two years were crazy, and I even did dangerous things. Then I started to be a teacher. I didn't have an idea, but in Spain you have practices. They just watch the teacher how they do. You learn by heart and by experience. I learned there how to become a teacher,
to do my lesson plans, and how to treat children. Talking to other teachers from there, I was learning. I was teaching eight years in Madrid, but it was in the countryside. I moved because I met my husband in the countryside. He is from the capital from Madrid, in the center. We moved two years ago to Madrid. Suddenly I became a very responsible person. From one night to another, one day to another, I just focused on my work. I think sometimes I have difficulties to find hobbies because I love my job. I'm always looking for things related to the job and people say, "You don't need to be like this." Maybe I'm obsessive now or I don't know what else to do.

**Texas Application**

I applied for the program again. This was the third time I applied. The first one they didn't take me because of my picture was in a wrong thing. You have like ten days to correct, and I couldn't, so they just put me out. Then the Louisiana called me after my decision. It was Shreveport, where I went this Christmas just to see where I would have been teaching. I applied for Texas. I was expecting to be in Dallas, or I don't know, in other places. They chose me for here so it made me very happy. It’s like the most beautiful city from Texas. They accept your application and then they choose you to interview. I don't know the translation, but it’s like the person who's of the program in Texas, and maybe also in Oklahoma. I think it’s one or two states. A person chooses in the computer which people have all their requirements to come to here. Then the person who is in charged says, "You to here and you to here." I don't know how they do it, but they just split the people. So I was like, very lucky to be here. I could be in Odessa. After they chose you, you go an interview with all of the Texas people that have been chosen. The person that is in charge talks to you about what do you have to do, what have to pay,
and all the documents that you will need to come to Texas if you are selected. They tell you to schedule the interview. My interview was in a hotel. They have like, the bed, a door, then they have like a living room, and they did the interviews there. All the visiting teachers were in the hall, and it was huge, of course. We were going upstairs and downstairs. It took a long, long time. Fortunately my last name is "A", so I was the first one. I went to the interview, and then I just went back to the hall had to wait. I did the exam and the interview about eight in the morning, and I had to wait until eight that night. All the people had to do all the stuff. After the interview, you had to do like a writing exam about your experience just to so they can see your English grammar. A dozen people have been chosen that day, and it’s the same every day. If you didn't make it, you wouldn't have a choice with the other cities either, maybe. If the person that is in charge likes you, they can talk to the person that is in charge of the program somewhere else and say, "This one is good. So if you want to offer her another position in another state, it's okay.” Usually you just go out and you have to attend another year. It's tough. So that's why people are very nervous in the interview. Even if you do well it's difficult, because you are like risking so much. I love America from the movies, and so I want to risk so much to come here. To come here is like a dream come true like, “Wow! Everything is perfect here." Not many people can come here with this program, because few are the chosen. You feel like, "Ah, I am having an experience that not everybody can have.” My parents were like, "Are you going there?" and I say, "Yes.” People think that in America they don't live like what we live in Spain. I wanted to know the truth. The thing is that, here, people earn more money and have lot of positions for jobs. In Spain now it is like we're in recession. We're in a bad situation right now. Many people don't
have jobs. Even if you have a job, it is very bad pay. Here, maybe in one hour you can get paid eight dollars an hour the minimum. There, maybe it's four or six dollars and hour. I don't know, or free. Many young people prefer not to work than work for so few dollars. There are a lot of young people not working. There is like no working, no salary, no reason to wake up and get out of bed. So they are doing nothing. Their parents are working, and they are like on the internet and Facebook.

The thing is that the more pay works asks for experience. You maybe are thirty years old, and you cannot work because you don't have experience. So it's like a circle. Many people are fifty years old now with no job and it's very difficult for them to start a new job. It's a bad situation. Now here, the thing is that you have a lot of jobs. You earn more money than there. The house leasing is more expensive, but you can pay. I don't know, but there is something to live for here.

**Family**

My husband came I think in December. He was a civil servant as well, so he has to ask for permission. He has just obtained the work permit. He will start working now, but it takes long time. He came with me during the summer for vacation, and then he went to Madrid to ask for permission. It took like four months to get the permission, and then he came. He has a job like me when he comes back to Spain. It’s a good thing to have civil servant jobs. I was working in Madrid. I was starting with a bidding well program. It is in English and Spanish. I was the coordinator for four years in the school. I just moved because of my husband, but if not for him I would be happy there. Then in Madrid there was a very, very small school. The other in Spain was huge more like this one.
In my second year I was asked for being in Louisiana. The same program is the same as this one, but in Louisiana. They just put me in the possible list. Then at the same time, my principal told me to be the assistant principal. I had to choose between Louisiana or being an assistant principal. Louisiana was not for sure. I said, “Okay! I become assistant principal.” I was the assistant principal that year. I prefer being a teacher. Assistant principals, they had too many things to do there. I laugh a lot and maybe people don't get me seriously. I don't feel that serious, I feel like a teacher.

Figure 12. State of Texas.

Educational System

I found, for example, the educational system here is not better, and it’s not worse. It has good things and bad things. I think first that the educational system here was like, “Wow!” The children here they have many resources. In Spain, all the teachers have their own resources, but it's not like one line for all of them. I thought it was just very different than what I was taught in the university. You know like," In America they have this kind of education system," and I go, "Okay." I think I teach like in when I’m in Spain. I have my resources so I use them. I learn from my older colleagues, but they have their own
techniques. I'm just learning because they are older people, not because they are from American education. Here it is very strict with time. In Spain, can introduce the topic, and if the kids don’t understand you can spend more time. Here it’s like, “No, no, no.” You pass to the next step, and to the next, and then at the end if they don't get it you have to review with those who didn't get it. In Spain, you are very open to change your lesson. Nobody is coming in to check you all the time. Here is very stressful. The principal and the assistant principal are always coming to the class to see if you’re doing a good job. In Spain, I have been like ten years teaching, and maybe they enter, but they are not writing anything. If you do your job they don't disturb you.

Here it is like very stressful too for the kids, because of their tests. I feel that they are not learning basic thing. They are just preparing for the test, test, test. You want to teach them basic things from life. Sometimes you have to stop the class debate, or teach them how to address people, basic things. When they are older, you do not have time. No, no, no, let’s do this math, let’s do science, let's go have a test. You do not have that freedom to just relax and be like a mom. They see you here not a friend, but they have more confidence with you. They may can talk to you about their problems, and you spend time, and it is very good for them just to think about what happen, but here you have no time for life problems. I feel bad because of that. Because they are like, I don’t know, they have to be very inline, very hands still here and quiet. Somebody should go like this, “Come on, they are kids.” I don’t know, but that’s my opinion. I think that some children need to be like moving, because it is their natural thing. It is like they are not focusing if they are not moving. When I stop them they don’t concentrate, and if they are more focused, why do I need to stop them?
Relationships at Work

My team is very nice, and they have been very nice with me. The thing is that maybe they are criticizing too much, but I notice that in the American schools, or maybe it’s just in this one. They are very friendly and say, “How are you? How was your day?” but they are not really interested in your day. Maybe people would call that superficial. In Spain, we go out. We go to their houses. Here, it is very difficult to find friends. Mexican people are different. They are more open, and I notice that even with the mothers that come here, I can talk to them in a different way than with teachers or American people. I think it's the culture, but I don't know. I don’t criticize that, because we are different. But it is very difficult for me to get involved with Americans. Maybe for them it is natural. On the second day in Spain we are all laughing, and here it's like very serious and no laughing since September. From here at this school I don’t have any friends. I just have one friend that is from Spain, and one from Mexico. We sometimes say, “Let’s go out one day,” but the day doesn't come, and I know it never will.

Living in America

The only thing I didn't expect was the roads. They are in bad condition here, and have cables all over everywhere. In Spain we have the cables and everything down under. We have them underground and we don't see them. Here is like they are everywhere. In Spain, from our money, we pay for the help and the insurances for everybody. So when you have cancer or whatever, you can go there and they take care of you. Here is like, you don't have the money, you die. It's very shocking for me. Everybody, even the people that don't work or don't have money can get help there.
I told my husband I could live here, except because of the insurance. For me it is very important to be sick and able go to the doctor, and don't worry about the bills. In the movie, do you know the last series that we watch in *Breaking Bad*? We watch the show that is about the guy that has cancer, and is like trafficking with drugs, because he has cancer and he has to pay all the bills. That’s why I feel hate for a while here in America. I just felt about that when I saw this series. I did not realize about that it’s true. The pharmacies have like a mafia. They lie everywhere, and this thing we have like in the doctors, that if you have to take a pill or something, they have like a general brand. They are cheaper than the other ones, so it's like old people kind of have a cheaper medicine here. It depends on the doctor maybe.

They said to come here to restart my life I will spend three-thousand dollars, but in my case, and I am alone, and I spent over ten-thousand dollars. I had the plane ticket, to be in a hotel, buy a car, rent the apartment plus one extra month, furniture, insurances, and for all the other things. I had some money in my account, but sometimes I had to say no, because I don't have money. When you start work and are earning, you’re just like saving your money to recover. I have to work the whole year just to recover all the things I've spent to come here. I came to work three years, but it depends on the principal as well. For next year he approved, but it’s approved year by year, so I don't know. You risk and spend so much, and then you don’t know from year to year.

The public transportation for me is like when we lived in Spain. We have buses every ten or twenty minutes. Here you have to take the time for forty minutes to take a long bus, and it's like it's going around and around all the time. I think people here don't
use the public transportation enough, so there are not so many buses. In New Orleans they have it and it works very well. It's working very well in New York as well.

My husband doesn’t have a driver's license here. He's looking for a job and has to say, “I can't go there because there's no transportation.” Here you can have the driver's license with nothing. In Spain, you have to pay maybe two thousand dollars. For us there it’s like there is some book, it's like very, very hard. You have to do like many test, and sometimes people fail, and fail, and fail, because it is difficult. My husband is living in the capital, and the transportation so good that he can survive without the driver's license. So when he came here he was like forty, very old, and trying to have a license. One thing that is very nice here are the apartments. In Madrid, in the capital, they are like thirty feet square for two people. Here it is enormous, and we are like feeling like living in a palace. We will go back to Madrid, and we will feel very much poor living in very small apartment.

**Making Friends and Learning English**

When you come here you are expecting that you will make friends like you did there, and then you find yourself in a new country all alone. I went with Spanish people that were here, but I wanted to learn English, so I didn't want to go out with them. I can dance, but didn’t want to go to bars by myself. For three months I was not speaking English outside of the school. I try just to go with my team, but they have families and they don’t invite you. Maybe here they just are more private on their own. If they have family they don’t need friends, or they don’t need more relationships. I don’t think it’s because I’m from Spain, I think it is just the culture. Or maybe it’s not very funny to go out with the person that doesn't speak English very well. Maybe they say it’s like a
handicap. I volunteered to do things for dogs and cats. It is close to here, and I went there just to meet people more, and be with animals like when I was a kid. I didn’t want to be alone. I met people, but I didn't get involved. I would say I came here to meet people, but then they didn't give you their mobile phone. Maybe they have their own friends and don’t need others. Maybe they do things and don’t get involved in doing things with others.

My husband told me, “How many friends do you have?” I say, “None.” I’m very friendly, but for me it is very hard to find a friend, a real friend, but I keep trying. He’s always telling me that I am very hard for making new friends, because I expect too much from them. Maybe it is my problem.

Healthy Lifestyle and Food

In Spain, I go to a gym and like cost thirty dollars, and the same thing we have here is seventy dollars. We have pavements where people walk, and here they don’t have too many sidewalks. I guess they don’t need to because people don’t walk here. They go by car everywhere. The first time that I went walking around our apartment, I was like nobody is walking here, and I feel people are looking at me everywhere. In Spain I do not do cycling, only because there is no space in our apartment. The food that they eat here is something that attracts my attention, and people here eat very badly. You have very fast, very mad and it is very, very cheap. You can go to the supermarket to buy vegetable and fruit, but I spend like twenty dollars for an apple. In Spain, you go to the restaurants during the weekends, or when you work in an office. Everything is handmade. They have soups that are made from home. All the things are made from home. Here it is like hamburgers, chips, fish and all with the grease around. There we have fish like seafood.
There it is more from home, and it is cheaper than here. Healthy people here buy whole food and it is very expensive. We have hamburgers like McDonald's or something, but they are all the teenagers that go there. The adults, we don’t really go there. The adults still prefer restaurants, fish, or a good meat. Here it is like one little piece of meat is sixteen dollars. In Spain you can afford the meat, and we have plenty of vegetables. There are farmers around and so it is very, very cheap.

**Travel**

I think I come here to also to travel. The only extra money that I have here is just for travelling to all the beautiful places that I know from the movies. I was waiting for my husband to come here to travel together. We went to New Orleans, New York, Las Vegas, and California. We went to go to New Mexico to see the Four Corners, then to Colorado.

**If You Don't Have Genoveva**

You have Genoveva to do all things with you when you come. It takes time, because we are like twenty teachers. Genoveva has one car, so it took forever. One day we were going to one place, and she was just coming and coming. We were very tired, and I don’t know how she does this for all the people. People sometimes get angry that they have to wait for an hour, likes it’s a nightmare or whatever. We are lucky that we have her, because in other states they have to do the things by their own. Here we have many problems, and she just helps, or is a good support.

**Staying Longer**

I can’t stay because my husband has to go back, and I can’t stay here without him. I am very dependent for my husband. My husband works in the capital. I know if I would
stay I would stay alone. My family is in the North of Spain, only five hours, and I miss them. I learned here that you have to be very open minded. If you expect something and you don’t get it, you cannot say like a lot of Spanish people say, “This is a cheat.” We are in a different country, and you have to accept that you are in another country, not Spain. You should try to see the differences, learn to live, and grow as a person. Maybe you cry and shout, but then you calm down, and you say, “Okay, that’s not that bad.” Maybe some people are happier in Spain. I can understand that they go back. I've been in here just six months, but the funny side is that I don’t know in school the different vocabulary, and I laugh very much with them and say, “What is that?” and they say they talk in Spanish. I will not understand them, or they say the same to me. “What are you saying, teacher? That is not in my country.” It is very funny when they talk the same language but different words.
VIII. PORTRAIT OF CANDALERIA SUSURRO: “CANDLE WHISPERS”

Like many of us in Spain Candaleria was awakened by the English language at an early age and for her it opened up a whole world to a girl who grew up in a small town. Since that time she heard the world whispering for her and has traveled the globe extensively. She married outside of our country and she is a mother that wanted to give her children a global perspective of the world. She wanted her children to experience an education in the states, and benefit from learning English in the United States. While seeking to experience the world abroad she holds dearly the memories of her family and home in Spain. She believes, based on her relationships here with other transnational teachers, that her experiences here have been easier than perhaps because she has traveled and embraces the culture of many countries. She longs to share her story with other teachers who are considering traveling abroad during their career. Candaleria has a passion for global education and is working with our team of transnational teachers to create the report for the Spanish Embassy.
Plática of Candaleria Susurro

"Other things may change us, but we start and end with the family". Anthony Brandt

Figure 13. Candaleria's Family.

Early Life and Education

I'm forty-three years old and I come from Spain. I actually come from a very small town, approximately one-hundred kilometers from Barcelona. This is a very rural area where I lived. So, I have been living there for all my life. Actually, I have been living abroad too but I was born there and I live there until I was twenty-six years old. The town it has only two-thousand inhabitants. My life there as a child, was very simple. I went to school and I do with my homework. During my vacations I went to the beach nearby. I didn't travel much as a kid because my parents were textile factory workers. There was not much money to spend but it was a really happy life. I’m satisfied with it and I don't regret anything. My parents were very interested in me and my sister. This was so we wouldn't be working into factory after some time. So, we struggled but we were very good students. I don't know if it was because my parent were so interested in our education or because we were just like that. We did our best and my sister now is a lawyer and I have a degree in English Philosophy.
Educational Awakening

I was five years in the university called the University of Barcelona. I spent five years there studying English. Actually, I was studying English culture, poetry, and American culture too. From that time it was like discovering the world for me. I mean, from the first time I learned English in high school it was a discovery. I realized that now, by studying English, I could go anywhere in the world. To go living anywhere for me was a great thing. I mean it was a breaking moment in my life. I just loved English and American literature and I couldn’t wait to experience the world.

Teaching Jobs

I learned in the university and after that so I decided to become a teacher because it's actually the normal thing to do when you're in Spain. It is very important to learn and to know English so you can get a job as very, very fast. I got a job as a teacher after one week from leaving university. I started in a private school maybe it was a religious school and after one year I decided to do something else because I didn't want to start being a teacher and during all my life. At that moment I was very young. I decided to go to Germany because I had learned Germany in the University too and I spoke well a little bit at that time.

Call of the World

I had learned some German in the university. I didn't know yet but I like to travel a lot. I went to Germany to make to do three-month course in German and I stayed there for two years actually. I began to work there. I taught Spanish in different language schools and I learned a lot of German. I met my husband there, so it was quite an experience. My husband is from Cuba and he was studying there, too and we got married.
after six months. I decided to go back to Catalonia because there I had the opportunity to work in the public school.

Return to Spain

It was easy for me to work in my own country. I went back to Spain and I became a teacher of English in secondary school and that's what I did for ten years. I have taught from seventh to twelfth grades. I actually like eleventh and twelfth grades more because they are small adults. You can talk to them as if they were adults. They are very interested as they get older. They are very interested in English language too. I really enjoyed my job there and then I had my first kid when I was twenty-nine years old. I had my second child after three more years. My older daughter's name is called Adriana and she's now fifteen years old. My second child is Roger and he's twelve years old.

The World Whispers Again

When my kids were older I was feeling that I needed a change and I was happy with my job and everything but I wanted a change. I decided to try to live abroad for a time again. This time I'm with the whole family but we've always traveled a lot and I was in Cuba like twelve times or more. I mean, every summer I spent in Cuba, so we've been to Germany many, many times because we have family there. We've traveled around Spain too so it was not an unusual thing for us to look for some other place to go. So we decided to try for the Spanish program for visiting teachers.

American Journey Begins

I tried it once two years ago and I didn't pass the interview for Canada. I thought, well, I'm going good do it best. I'm going to do it better next time because I was very scared in my first interview. I was very nervous so I was like, blocked and I didn't do it
very well. So the second time I said, "Okay, I'm going to try the USA." I tried Texas and there I passed all the paperwork part so to say because I have such a long experience. I thought, "Yeah, that's going to be easy." But the second part is the interview and again I was very nervous. This time I found it was quite easy because they were so nice. When I came into the interview they were so friendly that I relaxed and I began to explain my experiences. In this way I got the job here. In Spain this is an interview they do in April two years ago. There are a lot of people trying to come here. There were two-hundred people there. There are two-hundred people every day for seven days and I got the job. I was very excited about it. I think it is the best thing I've done during my life. It was a good decision and I'm realizing it every day because my kids have learned so much here.

Reasons for Coming

That's one reason I came here was for them, my children, also because I wanted them to have a broad mind. I want for them to see how people do things in other places not only in that small town where we come from. They're actually quite used to traveling too but not living abroad. At the beginning they didn't like it here very much, but after three months it was a great success because my daughter was a student of the month in the month of December and that was very, very nice. Now it's actually that the decision was so good that they don't want to go back. So, for me it's been a success from my part. Of course I was very interested to see how education works in the USA. in general. I was sure I was going to learn a lot here in Texas even if it is not what I'm used to in Spain. I went from twelfth grade to pre-K. I told them at the beginning I have only taught secondary grades. In Spain, if you have a master's degree you are not allowed to work in elementary schools. They said, "Oh, I didn't know that." I said, "Yeah, that's why I don't
have any experience in elementary school." I said, "I feel I can do it because I've done a lot of grades" and they said, "Yeah, yeah, I think you can do it too. So let's try." So, I'm very, very grateful to them for all that I've learned and that I'm still learning and it's like discovering a new life.

**Culture Differences**

It wasn't easy at the beginning, not easy at all, because we were very different. In Spain it is a much more relaxed way. For example, in the figure of the principal is not so important as here. It's not the person you have to give explanations for everything. It's like a colleague that doesn't work for a time and then becomes a teacher again. So, the relationship with the principal is very different here.

**Organization**

Everything is very organized much more than in Spain. So it was really stressful at the beginning and I didn't know if I was going to make it. Thanks to my experience, I think, I was capable of adjusting. For example, the paperwork thing here where everything has to be written down and then you have to send so many e-mails. You get so stress when you have so much information to give the parents. Then these kinds of things make it very hard for us. I think that but I'm very comfortable here in Pre-K but it's more stressful still. In Spain, I mean the paperwork is much reduced. You concentrate more in teaching. I know colleagues here that do higher grades and this is very hard for them to do that. They don't have time for the teaching part. You cannot spend time with the kid because we have this other thing we must do like testing. You just have to get to the end of the day. You learn how to be mature and to work maybe in another way. You get mature in a teaching sense.
Secondary Education

Secondary education is much better here than in Spain. I'm very, very happy that my kids can grow to the high school in this case and middle school. They go to a very good school and of course they have learned better English than mine. They have a better accent than mine, of course, but I mean they are very comfortable. The behavior issues are also reduced here in comparison with Spain in those higher grades. I don't have fears that they are not working in the school or anything because people here have a lot of resources and so they have a lot of choices. They like choices and they are very satisfied youth. We do not have so many choices in Spain. The kids get bored after sometime and this is the problem that we have that they want to quit school because there's the same option for everyone. It's very difficult to forget to concentrate on the same thing. After, let's say middle school, the dropout rate is quite high. I don't know the percentage for at this moment but I think that here it's not so high. I mean, I'm sure it's not so high because as I've said there are so many more options. My kids learned the language so fast. I mean after four months they were speaking normally with other kids. I could see that, and I thought, "Oh, my, gosh!" We have been studying English for twenty years and they have already learned the English so fast. They are in the same level as I am. It's faster for them to talk in English than in Spanish or Catalan because we speak Catalan too. So they are trilingual now and this opens for them the world.

Travel

We have spent our all of our vacations here, going abroad and we have been to the west, to the east and north, and many states. We have been to Florida driving by car to see my husband’s family. We have been to San Francisco and driving through all the
other states. We went to New York. I would recommend to everyone to come for the traveling part. I mean, it's such an amazing country. I mean I knew that even if I hadn't been here but now I realized it’s much worth coming here because learn so many things even apart from work. I love to take the car and go anywhere and I always asked my husband, "Where are we going next?" I love it here.

Children’s Lives

They have had such a different life from mine, from the beginning because of his father. They have been to Cuba like from when they were month's old. They have been there every summer. So, it's a different perspective from what I have growing up. Actually, my mother says to me, "Why did you turn this away? You should be a town or a village girl and look at you.” I asked her, "I don't know mom, maybe because of what you give me?” I spend so much time there than I wanted to do exactly the opposite. When I was twenty-four I discovered a way to go out. I knew that learning English I would be able to do that. I did my best, got my degree, and from that moment I wasn’t afraid to go everywhere. My kids are a thousand years apart from what I lived in their age. Time has changed but for them it has been totally, totally different. My husband's perspective too was being a town boy. What you are teaching your kids today is very different from what I was taught. They grow up knowing the world.

Should I Stay or Should I Go

I don't know if I stay now because that the problem now is that that everyone wants to stay for a little bit longer. Maybe I'll try another state here in the United States. The kids are telling me, "We don't want to go.” I could go back easily because they have the job waiting for me to go back. I didn't lose my job for anything.
**Lifetime Position in Spain**

In Spain I am a civil servant. It’s working for a government in a position that you never lose in your life. This is very typical of Europe that you have these kinds of jobs. They are all paid by the government directly. They need something that some time in your life you have done some tests and observations in the classroom and all of that and then they give you a position for life. You are always working for the government. I mean, you can quit and go somewhere else but that's not the normal thing to do. Some teachers are like here, they are hired by the principal for a year. Others are never hired because they were hired directly by the government. So, you can change places within the country and I have this kind of position, I applied for that and I've got this position. So, it means that when I come back, the place that I was teaching in the high school I was teaching is still there for me. Now, there are someone else doing the job like a substitution for me. It’s not a bad job to be a teacher in Spain. I mean they are quite well paid in comparison with the rest of the people in Spain.

**Private Sector Jobs**

Here in the United States in the private sector you have a lot of jobs. You can get a lot of money but in Spain this is impossible. Either you are very old and you have been through a lot of jobs or positions or you are somebody's son and then you are well paid. I mean the private sector is not so rich so to say. They don't pay so well. It’s very good for you to get a government position even if you don't earn so much. You know that you will earn this amount more or less throughout your life. Many people do wait because of the security it gets to you. You have to be a very bad teacher for somebody to say, "I want this person out." It’s very difficult to get fired and that's what I mean when I say many
people tried to get position as I have there or to come abroad to work.

**Responsibility Required**

I think that you have to be more responsible to come to work here. I mean many people sometimes I think they should come here but they don’t know what it is to work so hard. This job is seriously more responsibility. There are teachers there that because of this more liberty that they don't work much. They don't care much about what they do. I think you should come here for three months and know how it is to be responsible for everything not only the kids Here you have to be responsible in front of the principal, assistant principal, and everyone in the school. You have to be very serious. You have to be someone who can be trusted to work here. You can survive here if you’re a little bit like that already. If you are the kind of person that doesn’t like to work or is not so organized you better not be coming here to work. It’s going to be a disaster. I see more people coming because there’s this option but I think, “Oh my, this one is not going to be lasting long.” Part of your personality has to match to work here. Many things are better here that should sometimes applied in Spain. There we should have more control on the part of the administration in the school to some teachers that don’t do their jobs well. I don’t mean every day, but if they are failing. Many students are failing or the parents complain. The kind of control in such an amount, it should might make working and learning better there.

**Work Culture I’ve Learned**

I think I’m going to have more enemies when I come back because I’m going to say, “You should do this or that, and you should be responsible for your group. You should be doing that, blah, blah, blah, blah.” That’s something I didn’t do before. I think,
“Oh my” I’m going to say that because I have learned it here. I will say, “Come on, please. Do your work well, not only just do work, but do it well.”

**Work Culture Overload**

A little is good but a lot is not. Sometimes I do feel like maybe you don’t have enough freedom here. Last year when I started everyone came in to my room at any time every day. I can’t go on teaching if they are there. It was a very new to me and like an impact. Now I don’t really care. I just go on doing what I do and they are just there. Maybe this part should be more relaxed here because you can see if a teacher works well with the students’ results and in many other ways not only just coming in to the room. I thought this part was very stressful. I overcame the feeling of fear after a long time. There should be this control but maybe not every day or every week because it causes too much stress. I like here is that you are very organized and that you are very punctual. These are the best things about more advanced countries like America and Germany. In Spain, if there’s a meeting they say, “Okay. There is a meeting at two o’clock.” Many people come at two-thirty or two-twenty. This is impossible here. This is one thing that I like better here because I was always there at two o’clock. I was always expecting others to be on time, too.

**Professional Relationships**

I think relationships are the same thing like that in Spain. So sometimes you have misunderstandings but then, with time, you get along well. I don’t ever have like enemies in Spain and I don’t have them here. I didn’t expect to have them here, but you do have to also be very respectful. Everything has to be talked about, so instead of getting in to an argument I am trying to talk. Some teachers here don’t ever look in your face. In Spain,
you don’t see that some teachers from other grades are like looking at you with angry faces but here they do and you feel awful but you don’t want to complain. In Spain, people talk more about everyday things. They talk about the family more and you don’t do that here. You are more like drawing back in a way. People don’t talk about their families, not here. The personal things are kept at home. This is something that we missed. Me and other colleagues missed at the beginning that when you have the break or lunch and meet other teachers they don’t talk personal things. They talk about the school, or the meeting that we’re going to have, or something not so important. Nobody says, “What is your name,” “Do you have kids?” or, “What do you think about political things?” In Spain, everyone talks about politics. We don’t talk about religion because we are not very religious. Every day though when there is a new law with the minister everyone talks about that. Here we missed that, this kind of discussion, because you don’t find it anywhere here. The thing is too in Spain that when I work I have known these people for a long time. I have been here only for one year, so it’s not the same. But, I think that even if I stay like ten years, it would be the same, and I don’t think I get to know them. Nobody asks you about you family, or after spring break where you have been and they don’t care and this is sadly different. In Spain, everyone asks you, “Where have you been?” When I go back in the summer, everyone knows that I was in New York and friends that talk about it. Here, you’re not even asked. So, it’s okay. I’m not going to ask either.

Moving to Texas

I think that was easy for us. It’s also that my husband is a very active person and he is very used to living in four different countries. He is used to going there and asking
for how electricity works and this kind of stuff he does. He speaks Spanish and a little bit of English but he does all these things. It’s easier since we make like a team. He is a mechanical engineer and he does everything. He bought the two cars when we came here. Personally, he went to the car dealer and he did everything very quick. So, I rely on him on that. We came in the same time, in July. We were, for two weeks, in a hotel. After the two weeks, we had the car, and a house. He is very like straightforward person and he doesn’t fear anything, or talking. We say, “Oh, you always, you have to ask everything.” And, he says, “If I don’t ask, I don’t know.” Now, that he speaks a little bit of English, he is getting dangerous. People here are also very, very friendly. That’s another thing that I thought, “Oh, wow.” I said to my mom, “Mom, Americans are very friendly.” There’s an image that American people like very proud and close to themselves and that they don’t like to speak to persons from other countries. I said, “Well, I don’t know about the rest, but in Texas, people are very friendly.” That you go to the supermarket and they ask or they say, “Oh, that’s a nice dress you are wearing.” I mean, that, those things were like at the beginning I was shocked. Everyone spoke to you or people in the register machines and we’re asking you. In Spain, this doesn’t happen. This is strange. The people that don’t know you don’t ask you things or they don’t wave or say good morning every time. That was also a point that I say, “Oh, wow.” I mean, you know, every place has its prejudices. You think that in Spain the Spanish people are like dancing all the time and this is also not true. They dance in the south especially. In the north, we are more serious. I say now when they ask me, I say, “They are very friendly.” They say, “Really?” I would say, “Yes.” I mean, people that don’t know you help you. For example, at the beginning, when we were looking for some places and we
were on the streets looking at the paper, everyone or many people asked, “Do you need help?” or, “I can help you with the cell phone.” We were like, “What?” We’re not used to that. You don’t find that in Barcelona for example that people ask you if you need help. They’re going to wait for them to be asked. So it’s funny the Americans are so friendly to strangers but not to become friends or too personal.

**New Till Day Two**

I wouldn’t say you are supported and it is so hard here. I feel like they know where you come from and that you are from an exchange program. They know that you are a visiting teacher, but they only seem to know it one day. The second day, you have to be like the rest. I didn’t feel like any special treatment because I come from a government program so to say. I don’t think we get this treatment anywhere. I know some people that have like harder principals. They have problems with the principal because they don’t understand each other. It’s not that they say, “Okay, I understand you because you come from Spain.” No, I mean, from the second day, you have to act like the rest and you have to get used to everything fast. Coming into your room, you are not going to question that because this is what we do ever, in, with everyone. So, this is very hard in the heart. Some principals, you know, didn’t ask for anybody and maybe some way, they get somebody. I’m sure that some principals didn’t want anybody from this visiting program and they get people and then they have a new program. From our side, you have very good experience and you have to leave so many things. If you are ten years in education, you’d leave everything. I was in my second year in education, it would have been much worse. This bad but it could been worse to come here and adopt to the school I’m sure. I think it helped that I already taught in Germany. Some people come from
having lived for all their life in Madrid and they come here all of a sudden. Maybe they
don’t have this interest in other cultures they just say it’s an option. They think about it
one day and they are trying to get the job the next day. It’s a hard thing too, because,
you’re going to start a new life, so you should make sure you want this. It’s really hard
starting a new life especially for no reason. If you haven’t done it before ever how do you
start? You don’t even know where to start. We have a lot of experience in my family
with paperwork because my husband he was Cuban and then he became a Spanish
citizen. We did all the paperwork for that and we married in Cuba. We did all the
paperwork for the marriage. It’s not something that is new to us to go to an embassy you
know. Some people can’t even think of it in that way. We were involved. I said to him,
“We’re going to have to do this or we will have to do that,” because when, before I was
thinking of coming here, I thought, “Oh, where can I find information about what it is to
live there?” I didn’t find anything about the program or people here or the experiences.
There isn’t anything. When you said would I like to do this, I thought, yes, I’m going to
do it, just to help. I think it’s going to be an interesting document that many people can
read that even if it’s only for here in Texas. I only have the experience with the little kids
so I cannot talk about the other things. The important thing is going to be, like, what I
said about the principal, the administration and all that.

Testing

We talk about all the exams that you get here. These state exams don’t exist in
Spain. I don’t think it’s a bad idea that everyone takes the same exam. It’s a more equal
or an equal way to know a level for everyone. In Spain, every school chooses on the
exams and you choose as a teacher the exam you’re going to make. So, it doesn’t have
anything to do from this school to the other one. That’s a little bit crazy there, too. I think it’s better here, but the kids shouldn’t be so stressed about tests either. Money shouldn’t depend on the test kinds of thing. Like, an equal, a middle thing. Like, I think, in Germany they do this kind of exams for everyone, but money doesn’t depend on that because everyone gets the same money. All the schools get the same proportion. They don’t have to struggle so that the kids get so much good grades and you would be more relaxed because of that.

**Improving Experiences**

I think about this when I was asked to do a part of this research that getting histories like this is what we can do better to improve the experiences for transnational teachers. I think they should get more information about the way you work here and the way you live. There is so much entertainment to go to and this is the part that everyone likes here. The working part, they should be more informed about that. When they come here they don’t know that the principal is not a colleague. Some people go to them as if they were and then they speak to them in a way that they shouldn’t and they get in to trouble because of that. I think they should get information about how the administration works in the school. They need to know the role of administrators, their own role as teachers, and what you should or shouldn’t say or do in the school. They need a comparison of here Spain. Make them learn that because many people don’t read anything about where they’re going. They apply for Florida because of the beach or they apply for California because of Los Angeles and have no idea what they are getting in to. I’m sure that it’s not only Texas that you have to work so hard. I think the information thing, making sure that they get that information would be crucial. They come to surf or
they come to Texas to see the cowboys, real cowboys with horses. They don’t read much even if they are teachers. That’s why they don’t succeed. I’m sure about that. They didn’t know where they were going. Some people that come alone or even that come with husbands are not so used to so many things you have to do. You have to get or so many things to pay for like the insurance. Spanish people go live in Germany because we don’t have to take care of the health insurance. There it’s the same health insurance for all of you and you’re covered everywhere. Here this is very hard, and then you have all these insurances that you need for the car, for the health and everything.

**Sharing Experiences**

I think it’s important that people get the information and read the document we’re going to do to make sure this is not a disaster when they come because it can be very long even if it’s one year. This first year becomes a very long time if you are not good, or if you are not succeeding. You can choose only to stay for one year. The three years, for example, it will so fast. When I finish, I’m going to say, “Is that the end?” but, you know, you need time to get used to everything, so many things. Last year I was very lost, of course because I didn’t have experience with the little kids. But, now, I know what I’m doing. Next year, I’m going to think, “Oh, I’m not going to do that again,” When I go back to Spain I cannot do this or that. So it’s going to be so sad to go now that I have learned. I get sad to think that when you just start to learn it is time to go back home.
IX. CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE CREATION

This study sought to explore transnational teacher experiences using qualitative narrative inquiry. Critical knowledge was developed within the research based on written and photo narratives of the research partners (Barone, 20047). Sharing moments of cultural tensions and inspirations allowed connectivity of life experiences to explore the process of narrative inquiry. The cultural fronts retreat allowed partners to simultaneously explore temporality, sociality, and place events. These shared stories shaped understandings of social, cultural, institutional, and linguistic experiences (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008).

The teachers began the retreat by sharing their photo narratives. After each individual shared their story the research team had rich discussions about the narrative and their common experiences. As the stories unfolded themes representing tense and inspirational events began to emerge. The foundational premise of narrative inquiry is that it is created by the related stories and relationships of storytellers. Following the photo narrative presentations the research team collectively composed a list of common cultural fronts, both personal and professional, that had affected their experiences as transnational teachers (Waite, Nelson, & Guajardo, 2007). The ensuing emergent themes and findings were created by the participant researchers as the result of weaving their singular stories together and illuminating the authenticity of cultural experiences intersecting throughout their narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). As they illuminated their transecting experiences they also discussed the difficulties they encountered while navigating these events. While revisiting these events was painful, it also produced inspiration. The plática resulted in extrapolation of current and recommended supports that would benefit present
and future transnational teachers as they pursue teaching careers abroad (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008).

**Cultural Fronts Retreat**

![Cultural Fronts Retreat Invitation](image)

*Figure 14. Cultural Fronts Retreat Invitation.*

In our retreat written narratives were coupled, by the teachers, with the powerful effects of photo narratives. The photos support the narratives by closing gaps in native languages and visually capturing the convergence of common transecting experiences. Individually, influenced by their personal narratives, teachers constructed self-critical photo narratives. These narratives were presented and examined by the collective research partners in the final retreat. Using their personal narratives to frame their photo narrative collections teachers began to identify and dissect the cultural fronts they had individually experienced as transnational teachers. Teachers referred to the construction process for their presentations as cathartic and emotional as they examined ongoing cultural barriers and revisited social and cultural experiences. As they composed and recomposed their stories through oral and visual representation participants were able to
develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of their transnational life experiences and their ability to navigate difficult cultural moments of tension.

Teachers impacted by oral and written narratives shared in Chapters IV through VIII extrapolated pertinent experiences and supported the findings through correlations of their pláticas. The following sections are the retreat summaries of participants’ identified themes and findings within the research.

**Transnational Move**

**Decision to Apply**

*Figure 15. The World is a Book.*

*Figure 16. Madrid.*
Discussion Summary: Decision to Apply

The teachers discovered several key factors that pushed or pulled them to make the decision to apply for transnational teaching positions. Push factors, those associated with the country of origin, discussed by the group included the current economic recession, specifically in Spain, consistently low wages, and high levels of unemployment especially in the private sector. Cierra discussed how the current economic recession in Spain is influencing the decision to work or live in other countries especially among young adults. Genoveva shared that she was pushed by her mother from an early age to go abroad to work and study especially for short periods of time. Although for most Spanish teachers the decision is difficult because families are very close and the decision to live abroad, away from the family, is not easily accepted by their families.

Although push factors exerted some pressure, all of the teachers agreed that the decision to apply was mostly influenced by pull factors, those associated with the country or area of destination. These pull factors included such things as a desire to experience teaching abroad, better living conditions, and a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience living in another culture. Although most of the teachers came only with the intention to stay for one to three years they shared in their stories the desire to experience a better life and educational experience for themselves and their children (see Figure 15).

Each of the teachers had at least experienced studying, living, or working abroad for short periods of time prior to deciding to apply to the United States. However, most of their extant knowledge had come from living in European countries (see Figure 16). The majority of teachers had considered living abroad for many years and their career profiles
were consistent with persons preparing to teach other languages or in other countries, such as English certification. Teachers expressed that the more experiences they had in white euro countries the easier the transition to the new culture in Texas.

The decisions to apply also created tensions such as how the move to the US would affect their families. In fact, two of the five waited until their children were old enough to participate in the decision to move to the United States. Three of the five felt educational opportunities for their children were critical points in the decision process. Two of the teachers married in order to have their significant others join them in Texas. The teachers agreed their immediate family and close friends influenced their final decisions to apply.

**Recruitment, Interviews, and Accepting**

*Figure 17. Will You Get the Job?*

**Discussion Summary: Recruitment, Interviews, and Accepting**

A major finding of teachers’ experiences with the recruitment and interview process is that all of the teachers reported the process was the first source of cultural tension. Recruiting agencies posted hundreds of positions that were available across the
United States and set up large interview venues in hotels and colleges. However, in order to attend the recruiting events, teachers must first qualify by passing basic exams in addition to their professional credentials.

Prior to attending the interview teachers choose states they would like to interview for based on positions that matched their certification profile, or based on the number of job opportunities available in the state. Once candidates chose their states of interest the recruiters then determined if the candidates would be selected to interview. Teachers experienced long days of interviews and hours of waiting for hundreds of teachers to complete the interview process before selections were announced at the end of the day. The process consisted of face-to-face interviews with recruiters as well as written exams to determine language proficiency. Most of the teachers were only allowed to interview with one state, precluding the opportunity of interviews with multiple states to broaden their opportunities. Teachers described their common experiences as strained as they struggled to communicate in English and go through the same process for multiple days in a row in hopes of securing a position abroad (see Figure 17).

Teachers also experienced anxiety because recruiters disregarded their educational profiles during the interview and selection process. Interviewers, faced with the need to fill numerous positions would offer teachers positions that weren’t in their areas of experience, just to fill positions. Often teachers themselves chose states with high numbers of job openings, regardless of the teaching areas in order to secure a position within the transnational program. Several of the teachers had never taught in elementary schools but were offered positions in elementary bilingual education programs.
In addition, even though teachers were offered positions, based on their interviews, they did not have a specific job assignment. After being selected into the program teachers come to the district with a guarantee of a job but have no idea which school, grade, or content area they will teach. They accepted the positions with very little knowledge of exactly what to expect when they arrived in the district. Upon selection, teachers are given a brief overview regarding the costs and documentation requirements needed to complete the process. Teacher shared that they felt lucky to have the opportunity. They said they felt *elite* because many teachers apply and so few are chosen.

**Arrival Experiences**

*Figure 18. Ready for the Flight.*
Figure 19. Starting a New Life.

Figure 20. Looking for Home.
Discussion Summary: Arrival Experiences

Teachers described the arrival process as complete culture shock, producing some of the greatest tensions experienced during the entire transition from Spain to Texas. Most of the teachers described their arrival experiences as nightmarish. Although teachers had spent weeks or months preparing for this transition, they did not anticipate all the difficulties they faced when they actually arrived.

Teachers realized the move to the United States would be costly and most of them carried large amounts of cash into the country since they had not set up bank accounts and knew they would have immediate costs (see Figure 18). As teachers arrived their first priority was to secure housing and transportation. Initially, the districts provided temporary housing but the experiences are still difficult. The first few nights they were expected to stay and share rooms with other transnational teachers. All of the teachers described this as scary since they had large amounts of cash and did not know the other teachers. One group actually had to share hotel rooms with 11 other individuals and said that they did not sleep for multiple days. Others were lodged in dorm rooms with multiple people. Since they arrived only a couple of weeks before school began, they spent the first weeks looking for housing, securing transportation, setting up bank accounts, finalizing visa papers with the embassy, and interviewing for specific job assignments. Genoveva shared, “Shared rooms, shared beds, one rental car for five people. We were all over the place and the one car.”

Most transnational teachers arrived in the states alone, even if their families planned to join them. Sometimes the delay results from paperwork or visa complications with family members. Fausto’s family decided, since they had children to consider, for
him to arrive in the states and set up living arrangements to ensure a smoother transition for the entire family. Fausto commented, “That was a very bad time for me here all alone and making so many decisions (see Figure 19). I think it is a hard time for everyone that comes here even if they have been in other places teaching.” This adds extra pressure to the teachers who are trying to acquire affordable housing before they start teaching (see Figure 20). Candaleria explained that in her situation her husband, who is well traveled, was able to take care of the living arrangements while she was focused on teaching. She stated, “It’s easier since we make like a team. If you haven’t done it before ever how do you start? You don’t even know where to start.” For Cierra and Paquita, both of whom originally arrived alone, this period was described as the most difficult personal time for them in the process. Paquita said,

Since I arrived here, I spend money, money, money you know? You have to buy cars and rental here is crazy. I don’t know if you live in here but I was looking for a house for a long time. It was so expensive and I don’t get much help. If you cannot pay your rent, it is not like an option just to go to another place. Maybe you can’t go very far because you don’t want to be driving all day.

Cierra stated, “We have to do so many things and go so many places that we don’t know what we are doing there.”

Although teachers are guaranteed a job they have no idea which school they will be assigned to, or which grade level or subject they may teach. Further, since most do not acquire cars immediately, and are challenged by differences in cars and public transportation, they are chauffeured about by a volunteer, or other teachers who are able to acquire a car upon arrival. As interviews are scheduled, the teachers are required to go
to different schools to interview. It is not uncommon to place several teachers in temporary positions when school starts, just to cover classes, while they await a final assignment. This confusion and uncertainty regarding placement adds to the frustration of either delaying decisions about permanent housing, or even worse, making housing decisions too early, resulting in long commutes to unanticipated campus assignments.

During the first couple of weeks teachers must also attend required training from the Spanish embassy as well as new teacher training for the district. Sadly, it is not unusual for these sessions overlap and since the visa sessions are mandated, this forces them to miss their initial week of professional development workshops provided by the district.

Navigating Lifestyle Fronts

Homeland to New Land

Venezuela, the country I was born
We were born in a very humble family. We were very happy with the few things we had at that time. I was living there until I was 8 years old in 1981

Figure 21. Venezuelan Childhood.
Figure 22. Family in Galicia, Spain.

Figure 23. Small Villages.
Discussion Summary: Homeland to New Land

Genoveva says, “Life here is very different from what you are used to and that can be very good or very bad too.” Participants came from both rural areas and metropolitan areas (see Figures 21, 22, and 23). Teachers found that a critical difference between the United States and Europe is transportation. In Europe, cars are much smaller as are the roadways. Spaniards who own cars tend to drive standard transmissions, while most cars in the United States have automatic transmissions. However, most of the teachers lived in metropolitan areas and rarely drove, preferring to take public transportation whenever possible (see Figure 24). Driving cars was stressful due to the number of cars on the roadways and the difficulty in finding parking places. Fausto
describes driving in Rome as, “You cannot move, you cannot, and you get so stressed two million vehicles in Rome.”

On the other hand, transit systems are highly developed and run on schedule every ten minutes. Some of the teachers who had planned on using public transportation to go to work were dismayed to find they needed two cars per family. They were surprised that everybody here drives and public transportation only runs every forty minutes.

Three of the teachers talked about how Europeans walk everywhere and love the outdoors. They were extremely surprised that here nobody walks. Teachers said, I miss just to go for a walk. Just to go for walk is something that I used to do every day. Every single day I just go for a walk. That is a way you can just relax. I used to relax, but here, now I can only go to a grave or a playground. People here don't respect bicycles and there are not so many bicycles. There are not so many places in this world here to drive your bicycle. We have pavements where people walk and here they don't have too many sidewalks. I guess they don’t need to because people don’t walk here. They go by car everywhere. The

Figure 25. Things You Leave Behind.

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first time that I went walking around our apartment I was like nobody is walking here and I feel people are looking at me everywhere.

Family connection is very strong in Spain and families are inclined to live close and spend a lot of time together. The teachers even talked about how much they missed family time because in Spain the culture of work is to take off in the middle of the afternoon to spend some quality time with family, even if they have go back to work later in the evening. Paquita struggled so much with the family disconnection and professional expectations that she and her family only stayed one year before returning to Spain (see Figure 25).

While teachers tried to minimize all of the cultural challenges they were experiencing they had difficulty because as one of them said, “Everything changes in your life when you come here.” They also discussed that the first year there are so many differences personally and professionally that you cannot keep up with the changes and you just live through the experiences.
Diversity of Culture

Spain is full of culture and food.

*Figure 26. Culture and Food.*

MOVING TO ROME, SUMMER AND FALL 2008

*Figure 27. Rome.*
Discussion Summary: Diversity of Culture

Teachers described the cultural differences as affecting every aspect of their lives. Some of the most challenging cultural experiences had to do with both personal and professional experiences (see Figure 26). Genoveva described having to brainstorm with new teachers prior to their arrival to prepare them for living abroad. She shared that everything from housing, utilities, cars, family time, insurance, and work days are different and affect all teachers differently depending on their previous experiences. Fausto described the culture here as completely different from anything they are used to in their country (see Figure 27). He said,

It is a lot of changes like buying cars and insurance. I tried to find a place to live that would remind my family of home. We were so far and I just wanted them feel like they were home (see Figure 28). It is hard to find things that are like home because here it is so different.
Health care and social security variances were concerning for teachers. They were all very concerned about the quality and costs of health care, pharmaceuticals, and access to health care at reasonable prices. Cierra commented,

In Spain, from our money, we pay for the help and the insurances for everybody. So when you have cancer or whatever you can go there and they take care of you. Here is like, you don't have the money you die. It's very shocking for me. Everybody, even the people that don't work or don't have money can get help there. I told my husband I could live here except because of the insurance. For me it is very important, to be sick and able go to the doctor and don't worry about the bills The pharmacies have like a mafia. They lie everywhere and this thing we have like in the doctors that if you have to take a pill or something they have like a general brand. They are cheaper than the other ones so it's like old people kind of have a cheaper medicine here.”

**In America is more expensive than in Spain**

*Figure 29. Cost of Living.*
Paquita whose core cultural challenges hinged around family and access to health services and maternity leave stated,

Now I am pregnant and no one will take care of my child the first months of their life and I learned that I only can spend no more than three months or maybe less because you have maternity leave only for six weeks. Then you have to take health family care or health family leave, something like that? You can apply but maybe they will say no. I don’t know how it works but really you cannot have more than three months breastfeeding your child, and having like full time for your child.

Salary and cost of living were concerns for all of the transnational teachers. While some of their salaries here were higher than in Spain the costs of housing, transportation, utilities, and insurances were hugely different (see Figure 29). One of the teachers said, “Here, I have well, more money, but I need much more money here too because the cost of living difference is huge. It was so expensive and I don’t get much help.”

In Spain food and family are culturally interwoven. Teachers discussed having breakfast, desayuno, and lunch, comida, always with family and friends. They talked fondly of eating outdoors and about how fresh and healthy the food is in Spain. They compared the fresh foods in Spain with the cheap fast foods in the states. Cierra commented,

We know here we don't get the healthy food. The way you eat at home you can have the chance to eat healthy every day. In Spain, you go to the restaurants during the weekends or when you work in an office. Everything is handmade. They have soups that are made from home. All the things are made from home.
Here it is like hamburgers, chips, fish and all with the grease around. There we have fish like seafood. There it is more from home and it is cheaper than here. Healthy people here buy whole food and it is very expensive. We have hamburgers like McDonald's or something but they are all the teenagers that go there. The adults, we don’t really go there. The adults still prefer restaurants, fish, or a good meat. Here it is like one little piece of meat is sixteen dollars. In Spain you can afford the meat and we have plenty of vegetables. There are farmers around and so it is very, very cheap.

Teachers experienced dissatisfaction with respect to the work culture in the United States. They were unaccustomed to working long hours away from their families. They discussed that it is widely known that people in America work a lot of hours but that they still didn’t realize how much they work and how it affects family. Paquita said,

We know people here work a lot of hours and it's the culture. You work more to have a lot of money and you need the money to work more. It doesn't mean you want to work more but you need to work more. Sometimes you don't but you just want more money.

Candaleria, who has traveled and worked abroad extensively, said,

I see all of these things that are different but I think it would be like that for every country that you do not know and live. There is so much entertainment to go to and this is the part that everyone likes here. My husband is the one that does all these things and so that helps to have him and I just work. Things are different for my children too but it doesn’t take them very long to get used to things here. It helps that we have been to so many countries.”
Relationships Abroad

Importance of Family

*Figure 30.* Husband and Best Friend.

*Figure 31.* Pet Friends.
Discussion Summary: Importance of Family

All of the teachers exhibited strong emotion discussing the influence of family and friends as the true culture of Spain (see Figures 30, and 31). The cultural difference regarding the importance of family is perhaps the most critical challenge for transnational teachers because it impacts both their personal and professional experiences (see Figures
32, and 33). They describe the importance of having family around you and enjoying life socially with friends and food. In fact, their friends are considered their family as well and are always around. Genoveva stated,

In Spain we have schools for elementary and high school in the same place so we grew up together since we were four years old to 17 years old and we go off to college. Since we go to college we find work but we keep on having a beer almost every night after work.

Genoveva was so concerned about the reaction of her family and friends that she didn’t tell anyone that she had applied to the transnational program until she had interviewed and been accepted. She described her family and friends as being in shock about the news.

What teachers missed most was just time with their families here and abroad. They discussed missing sitting with family and talking, spending time cooking, and having meals and time to socialize. They talked about not just missing their families overseas but the fact that their work hours were so long here that they had no time for their family at home here in the states. Paquita said,

I miss my family. I miss to speak to them. The first thing is I don’t think it is easy for here to be a mother. I wanted to be a teacher because to have a family, and because I know that when you are teaching in Spain you can have a family. You can spend time with your family. You know, it is something that just, like, well, changes your life a lot. I don’t want criticize or sound like, “Hey, these guys don’t understand family.” It’s just that here family has to come after work and I am having a hard time with that. That really is very shocking for me because one of
the reason why I became a teacher was for these times with my family and that is something that was very weird because it is not the conditions for teachers in Spain.

Teachers also discussed the concept of family support and solidarity. They deliberated on the importance of knowing that your extended family is always there to support you throughout your life. Thus, teachers spoke about how their families encouraged them to seek educational and career opportunities including employment abroad. Yet often, despite their support, families find it hard to accept. Fausto stated, When you make these decisions you sometimes don’t realize what you are asking your family to live through. For me, it was very, very difficult. I only had a few days in Madrid before I came and did not have time for everything. One of my brothers was in for holidays during that period and I didn't even see him. I had seen him the summer before and I didn't see him again for two years. I wanted to at least see all the people that I could because the next Monday I was moving here.

As each teacher chatted about the challenges of living without family and friends they talked about how critical it was to have technology that allowed them to communicate with loved ones in Spain. Although schedules are challenging because of time differences they discussed being thankful for Skype, email, and texting. Teachers said internet connections become critical when you are away from you families for weeks, months, or years at a time.

Teachers explained that it was also important to have friends and family in the states. One teacher initially came with a friend, and they eventually married. Two
teachers married prior to coming so that their significant others could join them. The final
two teachers brought their families, including children. Genoveva said,

Most are not so lucky to have that family or friend with them to come here. You
feel like you are starting over again and you are alone always. It’s tough
especially if you come by yourself you are very lonely. Tired and lonely.

Although all of the teachers had challenges with family communication and being
away for extended periods of time, for some it was more devastating. Often while
teachers are working during their three year visa period they experience personal and
family illnesses or crises. The distance and costs of travel make it almost impossible to
return to Spain during these times. Cierra shared her experience losing her father,

He died while I am here and it has been the hardest thing that has happened to me
that my father died when I was here. It made me so sad not to be with him and my
family. I will miss him my whole life. He was one of the most important people in
my life. I really loved him. My family is in the North of Spain only five hours and
I miss them.

Fausto’s outlook on life as a result of his travels and experiences living abroad have
changed the way he thinks about family. He says,

I learned a few years ago before going to Italy because some personal experiences
that I you never know what's going to happen tomorrow. You know that you are
leaving your home in the morning but you don't know what's happening, when
you're going back in the evening. That’s not sad, it's life. When I get out of my
home I always worried about saying two things; first I'm not upset with anyone
and the second is say goodbye to everyone in the family.
New Friends and Colleagues

Figure 34. New Friends.

Figure 35. Old Friends.
Discussion Summary: New Friends and Colleagues

All of the teachers reported being disappointed and frustrated with the difficulty in making friends (see Figure 34). Because in Spain the culture is based on family and friends the teachers all found it problematic that they were not able to make friends or have close relationships with their colleagues (see Figure 35). They discussed multiple reasons for why they thought it was difficult or impossible to establish friendships. First, they reported that there is no time during the day or after school because of the work culture. Second, they felt overwhelmed, they found it difficult to talk to others while still learning to speak English fluently, or they believed American colleagues were afraid to speak Spanish. Genoveva states,

You don’t want to make new friends or worry to learn English. You only want to meet with somebody that you’re going to trust and is going to share with you whatever you are going through. You can’t feel like you are going home and still taking a test and having to learn and know everything. I find many people who
know Spanish but never speak to me in Spanish because they are not comfortable and think we are going to laugh at them or embarrass them.

Several of the teachers felt like they aren’t respected, that it just takes a lot of time to time to develop friendships, and that teachers here just aren’t truly interested in making friends especially in the workplace. Cierra said,

They are very friendly and say, “How are you? How was your day?” but they are not really interested in your day. Maybe people would call that superficial. In Spain, we go out. We go to their houses. Here, it is very difficult to find friends. Mexican people are different. They are more open and I notice that even with the mothers that come here, I can talk to them in a different way than with teachers or American people. I think it's the culture, but I don't know. I don’t criticize that because we are different. But it is very difficult for me to get involved with Americans. Maybe for them it is natural. We sometimes say, “Let’s go out one day” but the day doesn't come and I know it never will.

Teachers describe this as being a very difficult adjustment because at the end of the day they are all alone and they do not make connections with people like they would in their home country. Therefore, they describe most of their friendship in the states as being with other transnational teachers (see Figure 36). This is also difficult because there are so few here each year and they seldom work or live near one another.

Teachers also noted they had experienced behaviors they found prejudicial. They said it seemed easier to talk to, or become close to, Mexican colleagues as opposed to White co-workers. A couple of them talked about body language, specifically negative facial expressions of colleagues. Several noticed that they found that Americans in
general do not talk about personal things or even have conversation about things like politics that occur outside of the school environment. Candaleria said, “Here, you’re not even asked. So, it’s okay. I’m not going to ask either.” The teachers did find it interesting that people from this country appear to be very superficially friendly. For example, they may say “hi” in the stores or be helpful with directions. Candaleria said, “So it’s funny the Americans are so friendly to strangers but not to become friends or too personal.”

Fausto discussed, and the other teachers agreed, that just because you live in a country doesn’t mean you should judge or compare how the culture is different but that all countries are different and that is part of the experience.

**Saints and Supports**

*Figure 37. Spanish Cohort.*
Discussion Summary: Saints and Supports

All of the teachers, throughout their narratives and photo narratives, felt strongly that without supports they would not have been able to navigate the cultural challenges they have experienced during their tours teaching in America (see Figure 37). They spoke with reverence about Saint Genoveva and how her volunteering had provided them with supports from the very first day they arrived. Genoveva tells how things have changed from the first year transnational teacher who came to teach in Texas. She stated that she wished people could understand just how much it has changed since she first arrived and that the challenges that she experienced were the reason she now chooses to serve as a mentor for new transnational teachers. Fausto described Saint Genoveva as;

one of the best persons I've ever met. She was able to have all of our agendas in her head it was incredible, just incredible.” We thank her. We have a joke of Saint Genoveva de Texas. Saint because we wrote thousands of things for nominating to the pope in Rome.

All of the teachers talked about how lucky they were to have her to support them and that the team is also helpful if new teachers can find time to meet together (see
Figure 38). For those who are not able to meet with fellow teachers throughout the year it is harder. Candaleria said,

I wouldn’t say you are supported and it is so hard here. I feel like they know where you come from and that you are from an exchange program. They know that you are a visiting teacher, but they only seem to know it one day. The second day, you have to be like the rest.

Because she feels so strongly that not all teachers are supported she has been a significant factor in the decision to form a team preparing a report for the Spanish Embassy on the supports and information that should be provided for new transnational teachers.

**Organizations Culture**

**Rituals and Roles**

*Figure 39. Rituals and Relationships.*
Figure 40. Education Abroad.

Since I arrived, I have learnt so many things… Since the first weeks of training till these last weeks of school!

Figure 41. Learnings.
Discussion Summary: Rituals and Roles

Teachers agreed one of the hardest experiences was the ritual around job placement. They talked about how tough it was to come to the United States without knowing where they would live or teach. They tell about spending days on end driving from school to school interviewing for positions. Although the teachers are highly considered in Spain and most are civil servants, meaning their jobs are secure until they return, here they feel unappreciated and undervalued for the experience they bring to the educational field. Genoveva stated,

I remember that feeling at a school it was just like cows. They say, “I don’t care just send me anybody just send me three. I don’t care about their resumes I don’t care their backgrounds I don’t care their experience.

The teachers talked about how they left their countries as respected and valued educators. They are frustrated that they have left their families just to fill positions. Genoveva says,

So I leave my family and my friends and leave a school where I was recognized, where they knew and valued me. Here they just need to fill a position. So we just said we don’t want to go to that interview. We felt that they were not valuing what we were bringing. We were not looking for a job in Spain. We had our jobs. We had everything. We came here because we wanted to give something and we wanted to learn. We didn’t need a job to eat we were professionals.

Paquita says, “You come here and you don’t know what you are going to be teaching. You just go from school to school till someone says you will be teaching here and you say, ‘OK.’” Cierra states,
It is very hard to not know where you are going to be. You cannot know where to live or to stay because you may be too far to drive. You don’t know what school you should be going to or what the people will be like (see Figure 39). You say, “Yes,” I like this school but they don’t have a job for you. Some people don’t know where they will be even when school starts.

In addition to job placement all of the transnational teachers spoke about how their career profiles were not considered important in the hiring process. They were often concerned about the positions they were being offered, since they were not positions they had experience with (see Figure 40). As a result, they feared they would be a position where they could not experience success. Fausto accepted a position teaching second grade, despite the fact that all of his experience had been in upper elementary grades. Paquita went from teaching high school French to bilingual elementary classes. In addition, she had a number of special education students in her class despite having stated in her interview that she did not think she had the proper training to capably teach special education students. Nonetheless, the principal still chose to place her in the class. She struggled throughout the year. Candaleria experienced the same situation going from teaching 12th grade to teaching Pre-K.

In Spain the role of the principal and relationship with teachers is quite different than in the United States. Within the organizational culture in Spanish schools, although principals are teachers who have been chosen as instructional managers by their peers to oversee the school for a period of time, they lack formal authority. While the teachers see a need for a more structured management system in Spain they also struggle with the authoritative rule of American principals.
The teachers all expressed concerns about the amount of oversight by principals. They discussed their experiences of having multiple administrators come to their classrooms during instruction and how they felt they were not trusted as teachers. Genoveva said, “You feel like all the time they are watching you and you don’t have that in Spain. Here you are the king or the queen of the castle and you do whatever you want.”

The teachers all expressed concerns that principals come and go in the rooms all the time and judge what and how they are teaching. Often because they do not understand the significant role of the principal they find they have overstepped their roles in speaking to the principal as a colleague. Candaleria talked about how colleagues have spoken to principals and gotten into serious trouble because the relationship is so different in America. Both Paquita and Cierra talked about how they feel they do not have freedom to adjust lessons and curriculum to student needs or the ability to modify the curriculum during the school day (see Figure 41).

**Expectations and Pedagogy**

*Figure 42. New Pedagogy.*
Discussion Summary: Expectations and Pedagogy

As the dialogue of organizational culture progressed from job security to expectations, teachers addressed differences in expectations and pedagogy (see Figure 42). Several of the teachers commented that although they were seasoned educators they felt brand new their first year in the United States because of the higher expectations of longer work hours, rigid schedules, administrative roles, record keeping, relationships with parents, and the responsibilities of teachers (see Figure 43). Genoveva asked, “Am I going to be able to do all the things that they are expecting? The kids, the district, and their principal are expecting from me so much.”
Teachers agreed that the biggest professional challenge initially was adjusting to the work schedule (see Figure 44). They talked about the fact that in Spain and most European countries they only worked about 18 hours a week. While they had heard about the extensive hours in the US, they were not expecting ten to 12 hours days. Paquita said,

I cannot be teaching 18 hours per day. I say per week. It is the job. It is the job because first you’re not ready to work like all this much. You've been told, 'Oh, they work a lot in there.' You kind of figure out how hard it’s going to be but you don’t know it is going to be like working like this.

Candaleria stated,

You can survive here if you’re a little bit like that already. If you are the kind of person that doesn’t like to work or is not so organized you better not be coming here to work. It’s going to be a disaster. This first year becomes a very long time if you are not good, or if you are not succeeding.
Genoveva and Fausto talked about the adjustment to rigid schedules. Teachers were not used to planning for whole weeks and being told everything to do minute by minute. In Spain they had freedom to adjust their schedules. This rigid teaching style was described as stressful by all of the teachers. Talking about new transnational teachers, Genoveva said, “They were not realizing what it was like here with the life, the school, the administrators, and all of the work.”

Teachers were visibly stressed when they expressed their thoughts about the rigidity of curriculum expectations in the United States. They were also very emotional as they spoke about their dreams of becoming teachers and that the schedules are so defined here that there is no margin for creativity as a teacher or adjustments based on student needs. Fausto stated,

Here we have the same schedule every single day and that's a huge difference.
There you can take things in a different way, plan different activities, and different theories. You can interrupt, or you can continue working on something.
Here they are smoothly riding on the activity that you want them to bond and you say, Stop! The flowing, the flowing, the flowing is so important.

Paquita talked about how she originally thought it was great that the school gave you a plan but quickly realized that the inflexible plans do not allow for enough time for student mastery especially with so many students in her classroom. Cierra added the lesson plans are so restrictive that even if kids do not understand concepts you must stop them and move on to the next lesson. She added that with the stress of testing she does not feel like her students are learning basic concepts. She said when teaching you say, “No, no, no, let’s do this Math, let’s do Science, let's go have a test.”
Candaleria and Paquita were the most verbal about feeling the need to experience freedom in their classrooms and addressing curriculum. They are both experienced in teaching high school in Spain and have had the ability to do and teach what they wanted to in their classrooms in Spain. They both expressed frustration that in the States you do not have time for the teaching part of education and that you just focus on testing and getting to the end of the day.

Teachers agreed the organizational challenges were more stressful at the beginning of their experience and that the stress of personal and professional changes takes a period of adjustment. They agreed that the first year is messy and it takes at least two years to begin to manage the challenges and become confident in their positions. This led to a discussion about the possibility the program visa period of three years does not foster the highest productivity possible for transnational teachers. Genoveva says,

You know it just takes time to open your mind to get to know the system and understand it, to see the positive and negative and so the first and second year is not enough time to really know how things are here.

Despite the fact that teachers felt accepting a position abroad was an experience of a lifetime they also framed their experience as requiring dedication and responsibility.
Environment and Students

Discussion Summary: Environment and Students

Teachers were astonished to find that the physical classroom environments were not so different from European classrooms (see Figure 45, 46). Fausto stated, “The school environment is not so far away from its Spanish counterparts in Spain.” The main difference they found was that the buildings in the United States were newer structures
while school structures in Europe are often housed in older historic buildings (see Figure 47).

![Office of Education](image)

**Figure 48.** Office of Education.

Where teachers did find significant environment differences was in the social and temporal structures (see Figure 48). They found one significant difference in advanced countries was the organization and punctuality of schedules and professional meetings. The teachers had experienced these differences in other advanced countries and compared those experiences to the laid back temporal structures in Spain where classroom schedules are unstructured and meetings rarely begin on time.

Another huge difference teachers found was in the vast amount of resources provided for students and teachers in the States. They all agreed that in Spain teachers provided their own resources, and student resources, including educational materials, are limited. They felt the resources in America were responsible for the educational and ultimate career choices of students in America. They discussed the fact that the lack of
choices and resources in Spain leads student to become bored and quit school because they do not see any options for their future.

While transnational teachers did not find significant differences in student behaviors they did experience difficulties in language barriers and language development. Most of the teachers are teaching in bilingual elementary programs and thought that their language skills would be beneficial to assisting American children in acquisition of a second language. Several of them expressed that once they were here they were concerned that their English was not developed well enough and that their personal language mistakes might affect their students.

The teachers also discussed the language development of their students. They had assumed that since they would be teaching in bilingual classes, students would be bilingual. What they found were students who were not even strong in their first language and had limited experiences with language. They have found it very difficult to teach students especially since their Spanish dialect is so different from what they refer to as the Mexican Spanish their students speak.

Several of the teachers shared that their relationships with students were more difficult to establish within the environments and structures established in the United States. Cierra talked about not being able to talk to students on a personal level about their problems or to relax and be like a mother. Teachers also felt that expectations require kids to be still and serious most of the time, and that this is unnatural for students. Regardless, the teachers were dedicated to their passion for teaching and building relationships with kids. Fausto commented, “If you make a difference in the life of a
single child, if you make your students feel that each one of them is unique, that is the most important thing that you will have ever done.”

**Embracing Culture**

**Living and Becoming the Culture**

![Figure 49. Small Steps Into a New Culture.](image)

**Discussion Summary: Living and Becoming the Culture**

All of the transnational teachers viewed their experiences as life changing. They discussed how fortunate they were to have experienced the opportunity. Each felt they had learned about themselves, differences in educational systems, and a new culture both personally and professionally. They agreed that when you live in another culture you must be flexible and open minded in order to navigate the cultural challenges. Lastly, all of the teachers said that they would take memories and learning with them that make the challenges insignificant in the final analysis, but hope to develop systems that would make it easier for future transnational teachers (see Figure 49).
Genoveva said

Everything is so different and you change your life in so many ways that you
don’t even have time to realize what you are doing with your life. It took me a
year to realize this was a place I wanted to be. It was the right place for me. The
way it was here changed my whole life. I stay because there are still opportunities
to explore and learn and even sometimes I am tired because there is no perfect
system. I still feel motivated when I look for professional development and there
is something that I like, or joining a group I am learning. I like meeting people
who are also learning and so I still have that feeling that I have things to learn
here. So that keeps for me enough to balance the negative.

Figure 50. A Little More Texan.

Fausto said,

I stay because there are still opportunities to explore and learn and even
sometimes I am tired because there is no perfect system. I still feel motivated
when I look for professional development and there is something that I like, or
joining a group I am learning. I like meeting people who are also learning and so I
still have that feeling that I have things to learn here. So that keeps for me enough
to balance the negative.

People are mostly not aware that when you move to a different country there are so many cultural differences. You have to be very, very open minded. When you arrived from another country you have to look at things from their perspective (see Figure 50). If you always see things from your cultural perspective you will always say, “They are mad.” You may say, "What are they doing, or that's absurd!" That’s what sometimes happens.

You have to take things as they come but be prepared and plan for the future. Fight for your future, do the things that you have to do for the things that you want but be prepared to change your plans if things don't come the way you would like.”

Paquita stated,

I think it is the same for an American that would come to Spain. You have to get used to all the different things. I have had a hard time with such long hours and no time with the family. We tried to travel weekends and holidays just to get out of the city and spend time together and know the country. We will take those memories that are good like going to other states, parks, and places my family could relax.

Cierra responded,

I learned here that you have to be very open minded. If you expect something and you don’t get it, you cannot say like a lot of Spanish people say, ’This is a cheat.’ We are in a different country and you have to accept that you are in another
country not Spain. You should try to see the differences, learn to live, and grow as a person.

Candaleria commented,

They don't have time for the teaching part. You cannot spend time with the kid because we have this other thing we must do like testing. You just have to get to the end of the day. I would recommend to everyone to come for the traveling part. I mean, it's such an amazing country. I mean I knew that even if I hadn't been here but now I realized it’s much worth coming here because learn so many things even apart from work.
Chapter IX presented the discussions and findings of this qualitative research study, which examined the written and photo narratives of five transnational teachers living and working abroad in the United States. Their stories, based on experiences and cultural discourse, benefit us in exploring the meaning of their social and cultural experiences (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). This chapter presents the researchers’ suggested implications of cultural fronts for transnational education, and areas of future research critical to transnational teachers and global education. The chapter also offers recommendations for the emergent cultural fronts identified through sharing and analyzing their written and photo narratives in the final cultural retreat, and data analysis by the primary researcher.

The first section of the chapter is a restatement of the purpose and significance of this study. Then an overview and discussion of the emergent themes of the research is provided. In the third section implications for current practice are highlighted. Lastly, the research team makes recommendations for educational practice, future research, and the ongoing research actions being implemented in order to inform national and local educational communities.

**Restatement of the Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Qualitative methodology is an exploratory inquiry into a social problem to understand, what, how, and why the problem occurs (Creswell, 2003). This study proposed, through a study of visual narrative inquiry, to describe the lived experiences of transnational teachers as they navigated cultural fronts during their journeys teaching in American public schools. This research sought to explore emerging salient issues and
cultural forces identified by participants, through sharing their narratives and photo narratives that uniquely affect them as transnational teachers (González, 1997). Additionally, this study sought to provide data to inform the educational community as to how transnational teachers navigate cultural challenges, which affect both their personal and professional experiences (González, 1997). Finally the study sought to offer possible educational practices identified by the research team that could positively impact educational policy, practices, and transnational teachers experiencing cultural challenges in order to create more effective educational practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

**Research Questions**

Through narrative inquiry, the lived experiences of five transnational teachers were illuminated. The research journey through these transnational experiences was guided by the following four research questions: a) how do transnational teachers experience their relocation as it relates to family, teaching, and cultural challenges, b) what orientation training and professional development training is in place to support transnational teachers teaching in the United States. c) how do transnational teachers negotiate their cultural identities, and d) what practices and policies emerge as having an impact on transnational teacher experiences both positively and negatively?

Using the research as a framework to analyze problems and queries posed in the research questions was interwoven throughout the emergent themes constructed by the research team. When crafting the research questions I regarded them as independent considerations. The research employed resulted in non-linear relational correlations and thus questions cannot be manipulated as independent guides. Rather the themes integrated the problems and questions of each of the research questions including cultural
challenges, transnational supports, negotiation of identities, and practices and policies of transnational.

**Emergence and Implications of Living Cultural Fronts**

In order to develop a profound portrait of each transnational experience the research utilized a bricolage of methods including: a) narrative inquiry, b) *pláticas* to gather narratives, c) photo narratives, d) participant observation, and e) field notes. As teachers began telling their stories there was a natural weaving of personal, organizational, and social cultures. Their narratives connected social spaces, time, significant events, and situational experiences through descriptive storytelling (Lull, 2001). As they recomposed their histories into photo narratives personal, salient issues, and cultural challenges were identified (Cladinin & Connelly, 2000; Currie, 1998; Josselson, 2006). Teachers talked about feeling empowered through the process of simply verbalizing the issues and a sense of responsibility to the process of improving the programs and policies based on their personal transformation as a result of their knowledge (Friedman, 1997, p.18). As they examined lived and interrelated issues through social inquiry they developed a shared cultural knowledge of their transnational life-world spheres (Creswell, 2003; Habermas, 1962; Sergiovanni, 2000). Their discourse and discovery of these social and cultural spaces allowed them to identify not only the convergence of cultural fronts but a realization of the possible causal factors associated with these points of cultural tension as well (González, 1997; Lull, 1998). They also recognized that the tensions, and even inspirations, encompassed all social; personal, community, and professional fronts (see Figure 51, below).
Additionally, they determined that the symbiotic relationship of all of these spaces influenced their overall navigation of the transnational experience (González, 1997; Habermas, 1962). Regardless of the origin of the two converging cultures, the intersection of the cultural fronts created tension, inspiration, and opportunities for teachers to imagine transformative policy (Lull, 2001).

**Theme One: Transnational Move**

Study participants acknowledged there were numerous, divergent factors leading to their decision to apply for transnational teaching programs. The consensus among participants was that the individual *push* and *pull* factors made it difficult to predict the success of transnational teachers (Holland, 2012). Teachers also felt decisions to apply

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**Figure 51. Emergent Themes.**
were often based on hasty decision making, lack of transnational experience, and lack of
general information about the specific expectations and working conditions in the United
States. It is worth noting, extant research identifies these factors as contributing to
transnational teacher attrition (Ladd, 2007).

The influence of global education and the need to staff hard to fill classrooms has
led to recruiting transnational teachers (Friedman, 2005; Holland, 2012). The participants
encountered recruiting forums and interview processes where hundreds of teachers at a
time were interviewed over the course of several long exhausting days. They also voiced
concerns of feeling marginalized and exploited in the process, and that information
provided to them during the interviews was limited (Bowie, 2010). Teachers often
experienced language and cultural barriers during the interviews leaving them with
unanswered questions and feeling frustrated with the process. This caused teachers to feel
the interviewers did not have a deep understanding or regard for their culture (Geertz,
1973). Teachers also believed they were being recruited for their global or language
experiences without respect for their areas of expertise, or educational profiles (Rapoport,
2006).

Teachers arriving in the United States for the first time experienced cultural fronts
within all of their life-world and systems including, personal, community, and
professional (Habermas, 1962). While navigating personal cultural fronts they were also
traversing professional fronts. This was further complicated by the fact that although they
had jobs they did not have specific classroom positions. This situation meant they had to
continue interviewing until they were offered a specific position. This led them feeling
oppressed and without a sense of permanency based on this enforced change of cultural
reality (Friere, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

**Theme Two: Navigating Lifestyle Fronts**

Teachers found the massive numbers of cultural differences made it difficult to navigate their first and second years of teaching in the States. Even those with experiences teaching in other countries found themselves ill-equipped to navigate the cultural fronts they experienced immediately upon arrival in the United States. They experienced challenges that affected every aspect of their personal lives. Typically arriving only two weeks before classes began they had to react quickly to adjust to and address these personal cultural barriers. They also had to begin preparations for a new professional experience in which they would be confronted, and would have to cope, with unfamiliar organizational cultures. Narratives described the exhaustive list of cultural diversity and prompted discussions of how they were able, at least temporarily, to navigate the challenges successfully (González, 1997).

**Theme Three: Relationships Abroad**

Culture is steered primarily by relationships between people. The transnational teachers determined that one of the most challenging fronts to navigate was that of relationships with family, colleagues, and the challenge of making new friends. By coming to America, they had given up their daily cultural experience of having their close friends and family near them. They experienced withdrawal, loneliness, and isolation in their private and professional lives. For some of them this was eased when their families joined them a few weeks or months after arrival. Others continued to deal with the loss of family on a daily basis. On the professional level teachers described, with varying degrees, their social alienation within the workplace (Freire, 1970). Some
described non-verbal behaviors of colleagues and social exclusion leading them to feel isolated within the school culture (Bennet, 2004).

This isolation not only led to withdrawal, it also impeded feeling part of the team approach, expected among their colleagues, and left the transnational teachers feeling they were not valued within the organization (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

A significant finding was that negotiating cultural barriers was made easier by the development of a relationship with a mentor. Although this type of resource was minimally available to all transnational teachers during their transnational teaching assignments, for those who were able to find a mentor, it was a critical component in their early navigation of cultural challenges. Teachers unanimously agree that without this support they would have been unable to navigate housing challenges, transportation issues, and job interviews. Further, they believed without this support, they would have been unable to make effective personal and professional decisions when they first arrived. For a few, the continued connection with a mentor resulting in a collegial relationship has been a determining factor in their annual decision to continue in the transnational teacher program.

**Theme Four: Organizational Culture**

Teachers found that the district and campus organizational cultures presented many challenges resulting from embedded values, norms, relational, language, and management cultures (Needle, 2004). They experienced conflicting subcultures at all levels of the organization that affected work patterns, management vision, and expectations of staff (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Shein, 2004). In most cases teachers
identified the source of the challenges within the constructs of the organization and had successfully navigated the front and acclimated to the culture (Shein, 2004). In other accounts, the teachers only began to realize the underlying sources of tension as they worked their way through the research and worked together to co-construct knowledge during the final research retreat.

Most perplexing were the cultural customs and rules of behavior within the organization. Teachers were immediately conflicted, as they began working within the new structures and procedures such as schedules, meetings, customs, rules of behavior, and imbalances of power within the campus culture (Habermas, 1962; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Zhang, 2009).

They were experienced with their European educational culture and found the American day-to-day culture filled with relational tension among colleagues and with management (Geert, 1983; Hofstede, 2001). Several of them experienced power struggles between themselves and their principals. They were initially unaware of the diversity of the evaluative principal role in the United States as compared to the symbiotic teacher-leadership relationship country of origin (Freire, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2000).

Transnational teachers were overwhelmed with the vast curriculum assignments, paperwork, and rigid testing schedules (Alberts, 2008). They were challenged with learning new pedagogy as well as learning how to teach curricula differing from their profile or areas of expertise (Dunn, 2011). In addition, they realized the performance and work expectations far exceeded the expectations they experienced in the Spanish educational system. Although they appreciated the level of responsibility and high
expectations of standards they also found the work expectancy and influence of management oversight excessive and counterproductive to best practices and student success (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

**Theme Five: Embracing Transnationalism**

As transnational teachers crossed national borders and began experiencing cultural diversity they also acknowledged they had the opportunity of only living in the country or embracing aspects of the culture and creating a hybrid cultural experience and deepening of their own personal cultural development (Adkins & Caldwell, 2014). Teachers experienced all the stages of acculturation and found the greater the diversity and the more challenging the navigation of culture, the more time they needed for adjustment (Fee, 2010; Fletcher, 2007). For some this acclimation was overwhelming and they found the challenges insurmountable and chose not to continue in the transnational program for the full term of their visa (Coulter & Abney, 2009; Fee, 2010; Ladson-Billing, 2001). The others, although they found the spaces to be both safe and unsafe, have been able to mix and begin fusing and creating new cultural spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 1997). They realize this acclimation requires critical consciousness, reflexivity, and extended periods of time possibly even longer than the three year visa program (Alberts, 2008; Dunn, 2011; Lull, 2007; Urban, 2001). Teachers found the process of storytelling and sharing their transnational experiences allowed them to reflect and further develop their cultural identity while embracing global educational cultures (Bourdieu, 1984; Friedman, 2005).

Findings of this study have several implications for national policy. In order to effect positive change with this relatively new explosive phenomenon of transnational
education, leaders must examine the socio-economic, political, and personal forces that facilitate teacher migration and retention in U.S. schools (Barber, 2003; Michael, 2006). Local educational agencies must examine their criterion for hiring transnational teachers and implement local policies that embrace and provide equitable hiring practices, training initiatives, and support systems to ensure teacher effectiveness leading to student success. The implication for schools is that there must be structures and rituals in place that embrace the diversity of the organizational culture, create spaces open to communication, and encourage developing collaborative relationships among staff members. Leaders must fashion organizations where critical conversations are generated, valued, and lead to agency among staff to create productive institutions of schooling.

Finally, implications for transnational teachers must include consideration of recruiting practices, provision of critical information pre and post application into transnational program, and awareness of cultural diversity within life-world systems that affect the experiences of teaching abroad. By providing insights into the cultural fronts that challenge transnational teachers and understanding how they are negotiated by transnational teachers may provide a framework for making transnational best practice policy decisions at all levels of education (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

**National Policy Recommendations**

As teachers analyzed and presented their findings the conversations grew to include concerns that spiral around national transnational educational policy. We ascertained the absence of clear and well-communicated national policy or standards led to recruiting and educational agencies engaging in practices that resulted in devaluing the
professional qualifications of transnational teachers, and failed to protect them from
marginalizing experiences. We recommend national policies and standards be developed
to address these issues, and that national and state agencies be accountable for oversight
of regulated policy. We also believe it is advisable to expand the initial terms for
transnational teacher visas to allow time for natural acclimation to cultural challenges
since transnational teacher productivity begins to increase in their second and third years.
Teachers recommended a five year visa with the provision to renew at the end of the
initial term. We also recommend that recruiting and local education agencies review their
recruiting guidelines to place emphasis on recruiting transnational teachers for positions
that reflect their professional expertise and experiences. Finally, it is recommended that
post-secondary educational programs evaluate the possibility of developing transnational
courses and internships focused on global education. While these recommendations
primarily address national policy, they naturally encompass and reflect changes needed in
policies, rituals, and procedures relevant at the local educational agency, and campus
levels.

**District & Campus Recommendations**

**Recommendations for Theme One: Transnational Move**

Recommendations for policy and procedures affecting the transnational move for
teachers focus on the transnational recruiting process, communicating information to
potential and selected teachers, and systemic support for transnational teachers in the
transition process who continue to experience ongoing cultural challenges. The research
team recommends the interview process be refined by developing a local interview tool
that reflects hiring objectives for highly qualified transnational teachers and which
respects the academic profiles and expertise of transnational teachers. I recommend creating an interview team cognizant of, and empathetic to, push-pull factors and cultural challenges confronting transnational teachers. This team should include principals with experience leading transnational educators, and experienced district transnational teachers. In addition, recommendations are the transnational applicant receive timely and accurate information regarding program requirements, issues associated with relocation, information relevant to district and organizational culture, work related expectations, and material orienting teachers to academic and curriculum practices. The research team suggests the information could consist of videos, professional development, and a transnational handbook accessible online. Specifically relevant to the interview process, we recommend the decision to hire during initial interviews should either be made for a specific position, organization, or at the very minimum, should provide an interview day for all transnational teachers within the district, in a single location. This should happen quickly after their arrival in the States, and would significantly ease past difficulties associated with finding transportation to sequential campuses. Conducting interviews at a single location would enable campuses hiring staff to interview multiple candidates, and hire in shorter periods of time. Further, transnational teachers would gain valuable time to prepare academically for their teaching assignments prior to the beginning of school. Significantly, this would also contribute to reduced levels of anxiety for transnational teachers, enhancing their ability to prepared effectively for their new assignments, and anticipate their new assignments with higher levels of enthusiasm.

The research team agreed that early contact with cohort members and mentors improved their arrival experiences, and therefore suggested transnational teachers should
have mentors and long-term cohort groups that meet throughout their transnational experience. Cohorts would provide ongoing circles of dialogue and problem solving opportunities for teachers as they navigate their first two years, and allow third year teachers to mentor new transnationals.

Finally, due to the extremely difficult housing challenges experienced by teachers I recommend districts consider seeking temporary sponsors for housing until transportation and permanent housing acquisition are accomplished.

**Recommendations for Theme Two: Navigating Lifestyle Fronts**

Teachers throughout the research process were able, through storytelling, to compose and recompose their experiences and co-create understanding as well as discuss how they navigated each cultural challenge. For this reason teachers felt like storytelling and cultural sharing events should be ongoing opportunities for teachers throughout the three year program. I recommend developing online forums and blogs to allow optional, or extended opportunities for transnational teachers to share and dialogue about their day-to-day experiences.

**Recommendations for Theme Three: Relationships Abroad**

Sustaining relationships abroad and developing new personal and collegial relationships were paramount for teachers. Maintaining contact with families allowed ongoing, although distanced, support. Building new relationships generated collaborative working communities of support leading to the ability to more successfully navigate organizational practices and expectation. Therefore, it is recommended that work schedules include time for teachers to reach out to families abroad. Campus leaders are encouraged to lead cultural events to develop a campus culture of inclusiveness. Finally,
to encourage relationships as well as opportunities for social interaction and exposure to local culture it is recommended that campuses and mentors organize group events such as exploration of local venues, trips to local farmers markets, hiking or walking excursions, or other events that create experiences similar to transnational teachers homeland cultures.

**Recommendations for Theme Four: Organizational Culture**

Although teachers felt their professional development was impeded by minimal training preparation schedules prior to the beginning of school they felt strongly that the most valuable information needed was policy clarification, personnel roles, curriculum and testing guidelines, and teaching expectations. It is strongly recommended that teachers receive professional development regarding the roles of teachers and administrators. It is critical that they be informed about the evaluator role verses symbiotic role of administrators to which they are accustomed in European countries. The research team agreed that expectations regarding work schedules, curriculum implementation, and generic teacher duties should be communicated and guidelines provided for execution.

**Recommendations for Theme Five: Embracing Transnationalism**

Transnational teachers acknowledged that embracing transnationalism requires reflexivity on the part of the teachers. However, the team recommends that the mindset of the campus in general should be a growth mindset and that leadership should encourage the ongoing development of the campus culture. I also recommend that transnational teachers be offered summer seminars where they can dialogue about organizational challenges and determine strategies to navigate these events successfully for the duration of their assignments.
**Recommendation for District Action Plan**

In order that local education agencies develop effective transnational programs it is recommended that districts create District Transnational Teacher Program Action Plans. Based on the data analysis conducted in this research a district plan could include the following components:

- Phase I: Determine District Need for a Transitional Teaching Program
- Phase II: Pre-Hiring Plan
- Phase III Recruitment, Interview, and Placement Process
- Phase IV Transnational Transition Supports
- Phase V: Organizational Supports
- Phase VI: Transnational Mentor Plan
- Phase VII: Ongoing Supports and Annual Follow-Up

A sample transnational teacher program action plan developed with consideration of emergent themes found in this research has been included in this study (see Appendix J).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Transnational teacher research is in its infancy and the field is ripe for continued research. I believe future research should begin by examining the policies currently in place for transnational programs. Research on recruiting would generate practices to transform not only the ethical standards of hiring but also allow for accurate examination of the educational effects of hiring highly qualified transnational teachers.

Additionally, research should begin to look at professional development for transnational teachers as well as local agencies planning on implementing
transnational teacher programs. Participatory action research such as the embassy project born of this research should be extended to all transnational teachers in order to promote agency and determine ongoing support and best practices for transnational programs. It is alarming that we as a nation are implementing transnational agendas without sufficient information to guide the success and best practices for these programs.

Finally, ongoing research must be continued for new and returning transnational teachers in order to determine the supports needed for each stage of the program. Teachers in this research acknowledged that at each phase of their teaching experience they were challenged by different events including the transition plan for returning to their homeland.

**Beginning**

As I conclude the pages of this research I am overwhelmed by the transnational teacher voices stirred by the self-reflection of participants. As their stories swirl within my mind to guide my future research their voices ring loudest as they articulate their desire to guide the transformation of transnational teaching programs on their own accord. When I began this research I struggled to find transnational teachers who felt they could devote the time it would take to participate in the study. However, as teachers began to join the process others became interested. I regretted the inability to include many who fervently wanted to participate and desired to have their stories told and valued. Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm I have watched several transnational teachers unite to become agents of transformation. These teachers have written the Spanish Embassy and received approval to share their stories and recommendations.
through a written report, hopefully to be delivered in person, to the embassy. I consider the opportunity to organize, facilitate, and to experience the lives of invited participants a great honor. I am encouraged by the participants who believe that implementation of the aforementioned recommendations, based on my analysis of data, will improve the lives of current and future transnational teachers. Additionally, to watch research participants, empowered by my research, develop pluralistic partnerships in order to improve the transnational teaching program through their own action is perhaps the ultimate experience of this researcher.
APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

Definition of Terms

In this section I have provided definitions of key terms in the proposal in order to facilitate comprehension of the research.

- **Globalization**- A natural melding of cultures whereby one culture effortlessly absorbs foreign philosophies and practices and weaves them into their own society (Freidman, 2005).

- **Transnational teacher**- A foreign teacher who is born and educated in another country teaching in a public PreK- 12 school in the United States on a limited visa.

- **Importing**- As used in the research refers to the condition or process of being brought into a country for service. Transnational teachers are brought in on visas, "paper that has been seen," which are documents indicating they are authorized to enter or leave the country for purposes for which the visa is issued, with permission of an immigration official. The visa may be a document, but more commonly it is an endorsement of their passport. Specifically the H-1B is a non-immigrant visa used to enter the United States to work or provide service for a designated time period (AFT, 2009).

- **Transformation**- in regard to school improvement is indicative of a substantial change or improvement in the education system or personnel.
• **Visual Narrative Inquiry**- A visual ethnographic method of combining creative photographic or videography with narratives to create a narrative representation or story (Pink, 2007).

• **Cultural Fronts**- The cultural boundary zones between different classes and social groups (González, 1997).

• **Bricolage**- Bricolage as conceptualized by Denzin (2003) and further theorized by Kincheloe & Berry (2004), is reflected a critical, multi-interpretive, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry.
APPENDIX B

Susan Holt IRB Synopsis

Echoes of Transnational Teacher: Navigating Cultural Fronts

1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

This study will explore, gather, examine, and make meaning of the experiences of transnational teachers as they navigate cultural fronts, points of contact where cultural difference come into contact with each other, while teaching in public schools in the United States (González, 1997). Snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) will be employed to identify five teachers meeting the criterion of transnational teacher status including:

• Being from a country of origin outside of the United States
• Being a foreign, born and/or raised, teachers who was educated in country of origin
• Being a transnational teacher employed in a public school in the United States
• Currently on H1B visa
• Newly recruited or within the first year of teaching in the United States

The criteria for selection was intentionally determined in order to gain data from participants as they are experiencing the transition of becoming teachers in the United States for the first time. Participants must voluntarily agree to participate in a one-on-one plática, and to create a visual narrative project which includes participant selected photographs representing their
experiences and personal narrations of the photographs. Photographs will be selected by participants and modified or altered to protect the research participant’s anonymity if they make it into the final research report. All participants will be of sound mind and participation in this research project is voluntary. Any participant can withdraw at any point in the process.

2. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable Consent Form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

Through the process of snowball sampling the researcher will compile a list of informational rich transnational teachers who have been identified as cases of interest by colleagues and acquaintances. The researcher will send out a letter/email of introduction which will include a brief synopsis of the anticipated research project. The researcher will create a list of interested and eligible participants and contact them via phone to discuss the research in more detail and ask if they would be interested in meeting to discuss the research and possibly participating. If they are interested, a face-to-face meeting will be scheduled to discuss the details of the study and go over the consent form [see attachment] in order to expand on the project requirements, timelines and to attain the participants’ signature. If they are not interested, the researcher will go back to the original list of eligible participants to identify the next participant and repeat the process.

3. If your planned recruitment process involves emailing Texas State students, staff, faculty or other individuals using their active Texas State email address, provide details in the Synopsis. (In addition, the IRB will require a draft of your recruitment email, using the enclosed template and formatted as illustrated in the example in this document, submitted in addition to other required documents.)
The researcher will not be using their active Texas State email address for the recruitment processes.

4. If you plan to distribute a survey to collect information directly from individuals who comprise a significant proportion of one or more Texas State affiliation groups, as defined in Section 04 of UPPS No. 04.01.02, Information Resources Identity and Access Management, you must follow the review and approval procedures outlined in UPPS No. 01.03.05, Administrative Surveys, and provide information in your Synopsis regarding review and approval.

The researcher will not be distributing a survey to collect information in this study.

5. Describe the project’s methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc. If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

This is a qualitative study with a purpose of examining the experiences of transnational teachers navigating personal and professional cultural fronts as they transition to living and teaching in the United States. Observable collection will include a methodological bricolage in order to explore thick description of their lived experiences so transnational educators, policy makers and readers will better understand the dynamic experiences of transnational teachers in the United States (Kinchloe & Berry, 2004). [see attached method chart]

**Strategy/method #1 Plática:**

The intimate approach of a plática will be employed to uncover the rich narratives of participants through rich dialogue and allowing them to share experiences and stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The one-on-one plática also focused on building rapport with the participant and achieving an understanding of participant background. As they shared their
stories their reflections prompted deeper insights, expression, and expansion of stories (Wolcott, 2008).

A one-on-one _plática_ will initially be held with each participant where the participant will have an opportunity to share their transnational experiences. Open-ended prompts were used to guide this life story collection experience. [see attached _plática_ protocol] The _plática_ was audiotaped and transcribed. Transcriptions were edited with respect to the participants first language and retaining the fidelity of the _plática_. All raw observables including tapes, copies of transcriptions, and researcher field notes will be secured in a locked safe. In addition, each participant will create a visual narrative project which will be shared at a meaning making retreat. Copies or shared documents shared with the researcher will be secured in a locked safe.

**Strategy/method #2 Visual Narrative Project:**

Narrative inquiry is a structured process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narratives will be enhanced by the use of participant selected photographs which visually capture and express the stories. Participants will have full creative rights in the selection or photographs, inclusion of stories and sharing their projects during a final sharing retreat. Should participants choose not to attend there will be no penalty for non-participation in the sharing retreat and the visual narrative project will only be included upon their permission to share. [see attached sharing agenda]

**Strategy/method #3 Field Notes:**

A research log kept with researcher’s field notes and memos documenting each event occurring throughout the research. With the permission of the IRB, multiple data sources including narratives in the form of story as well as photographs illustrating historical, structural, situational, and symbolic representation will be collected (Lull, 2001). Participants’ stories and
visual narrative projects will serve as the vehicle for collecting and analyzing observables to understand the experiences of transnational teachers. Consistent with an interpretivist epistemology the researcher will serve as the research instrument for the study, relying on skills and experience as observer, listener, and storyteller (Patton, 2002) to collect observables from one-on-one pláticas, visual narratives, and reflective researcher journals.

6. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

There is minimal likelihood of any physical, psychological, social, legal, or other potential risks for participants or the researcher involved in this proposed study. In fact, the literature and personal research of myself and committee members understand that making this process available to my research participants will contribute to the meaning making of their lived experience as in potentially informs new knowledge, a gap in the literature and policy. However, the researcher will be diligent about the confidentiality of participants before and after observable collection meetings. This study will be designed and cognizant of researcher participant relationships, potential subjectivity of research interpretation, and the collection of observables and disclosure of potentially dangerous research partner information (Blackmon & Fairey, 2007). Additionally, the research will explore Employer Assistance Programs within the community or other support services that might be needed if research participants identify specific educational, social or cognitive needs.

7. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.
In order to protect participants and insure potential risks are minimalized participants will be informed in detail in regards to all aspects including, number of meetings, information and artifact requirements, and timeline of the study during the initial recruitment orientation conversations and meetings. All meeting agendas, procedures, and purposes will be clearly delineated and shared before meeting date. Their participation in the proposed study is by invitation and voluntary consent. There will be no monetary compensation or penalty for choosing to participate or not to participate in all or part of the study as indicated in the consent form. The consent form also informs participants that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Names and any identifiable information of participants’ names will not be disclosed. Transcripts and published documents will include pseudonyms in place of actual names (Dresser, 1998). Participants will read the results for approval and input before finalization and inclusion in the report. All collected observables to include audio- recordings, transcripts, photographs, software, and support resources will be kept in locked safe. The researcher will keep a master key and store it separate from the locked safe. All raw data collected, including collection of community resources by the researcher or participants, will be destroyed after a period of no longer than three years after the completion of the study.

8. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

There are no tangible benefits associated with participation in the project. However, participants are likely to gain insight through meaning making associated with their personal reflections of experiences as they share during the plática and create their visual narrative projects. This research will contribute to the literature by exploring the emerging salient issues and cultural forces identified in the narratives that uniquely affect transnational teachers (González, 1997) during their transition including the first year of their teaching experience in
the United States. Beyond participants, potential benefits to their organizations would be their enhanced awareness for self, conversation, and impact on their campus/district culture. These benefits can come in informing of personal support programs, institutional orientation and induction programs for new teachers, practices as they relate to policy and practice of recruitment and induction of transnational teachers to name a few.

9. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class. Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

There will be no compensation or credit offered to participants.

10. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.

The minimal risk, probable harm or discomfort, anticipated in this research involvement by participants is not greater than those encountered in daily life or routine experiences. The only record linking the participant to the research would be the participant consent form. The only potential benefits to participants from the research, which could be significant, are related to their personal consciousness of their own and shared transnational experiences. The contribution of their stories and meaning making process are also potentially significant as it relates to informing their personal and professional decisions.

11. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.
This study will not identify or research any specific site or agency.

12. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

I am a doctorate student in the School Improvement program. My supervising faculty member (Dissertation committee chair) is Dr. Miguel A. Guajardo.

13. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student’s committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

Dissertation proposal was approved on 6/25/2014 by dissertation committee members (see attachment). Submission of IRB has been delayed by academic and medical events. In July I presented with colleagues at BELMAS in England. Upon returning from the conference I presented medical issues related to a heart condition and diabetes. After diagnosis of multiple conditions I have had to accommodate my lifestyle and regulate medicine which initially caused constant dizziness, brain fog, and nausea. I am now adjusted to the medicine and have regulated the symptoms of the diseases and ready to move forward with my research.

14. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

This study has not been approved by another IRB.

15. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

The results of this study will be available to participants and committee members.

Results will be incorporated into my dissertation as a doctoral student at Texas State University. Papers summarizing results may be shared in the form of conference papers or professional journal articles, in which case participant identities will be protected by use of pseudonyms, and if necessary alteration of other potentially identifying information including place of origin, pictures, and other symbols that might identify them.
16. Provide date of completion of the required CITI training on the protection of human subjects. Applicants must provide training dates for themselves and for supervising faculty member. All training must be current and not expired.

CITI completion dates:

- Researcher: Susan M. Holt: 1/23/2013
- Dissertation Chair: Dr. Miguel A. Guajardo: 01-01-14
APPENDIX C

Recruitment Email Message

To: [Use this line for individual addresses or your own address if BCC line is used] From: Susan Holt

BCC: [Use this line when sending the same email message to multiple addresses]

Subject: Research Participation Invitation: Transnational Teachers: Navigating Cultural Fronts

This email message is an approved request for participation in research that has been approved or declared exempt by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

[Text of recruitment email message goes here. To enhance the likelihood of recipient participation, the PI may wish to include the purpose and anticipated value of the research project, the reason for the recipient’s selection, a statement of anonymity or confidentiality, the anticipated time required for participation, the voluntary nature of participation, and any incentives for participating.]

You are being invited to participate in a research project that seeks to explore and document the experiences of transnational teachers in the United States. You are invited to participate in this study after being identified as a having the required lived experience that will inform this body of work. The intent of this research is to understand your views and experiences as a transnational teacher working within a PK-12 school in the United States.

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will participate in an initial meeting lasting for approximately 60 minutes. In the meeting, you will be asked to share your experiences as a transnational teacher. For instance, you will be asked to share experiences such as: the decision to become a transnational teacher, recruitment and orientation experiences, relocation experiences, professional experiences including professional development, and cultural challenges. You will also be asked to participate in the development of a visual narrative project where you will share photographs along with written narratives in digital format which will be shared in a retreat with other research participants. The research extended over a three month period and it is estimated that participants engaged in the research for an estimated 20 hours.
Your participation is voluntary and as such, you may withdraw from the study at any
time. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No Identity
will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be
stored in a locked file in the investigator's office and the principal investigator, Susan
M. Holt, and her research chair will have sole access.

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon
request.
This project IRB Number _____ was approved by the Texas State IRB on IRB
Approval/Exemption Date ____. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research,
research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be
directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 - lasser@txstate.edu) and to
Becky Northcut, Director, Research Integrity & Compliance (512-245-2314 -
bnorthcut@txstate.edu).

Questions about this research should be addressed to Susan M. Holt at
sholtconsult@yahoo.com or
972-921-1456.
APPENDIX D

Consent Form to Participate in Research

Title of Dissertation:  Echoes of Transnational Teachers: Navigating Cultural Fronts

Principal Investigator: Susan M. Holt, M.Ed.
Doctoral Student
Texas State University - San Marcos
College of Education
601 University Drive, ASB South 322
San Marcos, TX 78666
sholtconsult@yahoo.com Cellular phone: (972) 921-1456

Texas State University - San Marcos IRB approval #__________

PURPOSE: You are being invited to participate in a research project that seeks to explore and document the experiences of transnational teachers in the United States. You are invited to participate in this study after being identified as having the required lived experience that will inform this body of work. The intent of this research is to understand your views and experiences as a transnational teacher working within a PK-12 school in the United States.

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will participate in an initial meeting lasting for approximately 60 minutes. In the meeting, you will be asked to share your experiences as a transnational teacher. For instance, you will be asked to share experiences such as: the decision to become a transnational teacher, recruitment and orientation experiences, relocation experiences, professional experiences including professional development, and cultural challenges. You will also be asked to participate in the development of a visual narrative project where you will share photographs along with written narratives in digital format which will be shared in a retreat with other research participants. Both the initial meeting and retreat will be audio-recorded with
your permission. Your participation is voluntary and as such, you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with Texas State University, San Marcos.
RISKS: In reflecting and talking about your experience as a transnational teacher you may experience happy and unhappy experiences as memories are recalled. However, you may elect not to discuss any experiences or answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain a participant in the research. There are no known psychological or physiological risks associated with participating in this research. All answers will remain confidential.

BENEFITS: Research on transnational teachers may be beneficial to educational school leaders in understanding how best to recruit and support transnational teachers as they navigate relocating to the United States. In addition, the research may provide further insight into understanding the types of programs and policies to research and/or pursue in order to prepare and retain transnational teachers in PK-12 settings.

COMPENSATION: You will not be paid for participation in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No Identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the investigator's office and the principal investigator, Susan M. Holt, and her research chair will have sole access. Your response(s) will appear only in statistical data summaries when the data are presented in written or oral form at scientific meetings. Your name will never appear in any publication of these data. All materials will be kept for a period no longer than three years.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.
I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call the investigator who is asking me to participate, Susan M. Holt at (972) 921-1456 or her Dissertation Chair Dr. Miguel Guajardo. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact the Director of the Office of Research Compliance at Texas State University - San Marcos, Becky Northcut at (512) 245-7975.

________________________________________  _______________________
Participant's Signature                      Date

________________________________________  _______________________
Investigator's Signature
APPENDIX E

Visual Narrative Project

Participant Guide

Visual Narrative is valued as a method of collecting research observables because it enables people to record and reflect their lived experiences, incorporates critical dialogue and meaning making of similar or shared experiences through discussion of personal photography and narratives (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Participants as part of this research are asked to create a visual narrative project and to share it with other research participants during a research retreat.

General Outline of Visual Narrative Project

- 10 -20 photos
- Titled
- Dated
- Brief Narrative
- 10-20 minute Digital presentation during the Share Retreat

Echoes of Transnational Teachers: Navigating Cultural Fronts

Research Questions

1. How do transnational teachers experience their relocation as it relates to family, teaching, and cultural challenges?

2. What orientation training and professional development training is in place to support transnational teachers teaching in the United States?
3. How do transnational teachers negotiate their cultural identities?

4. What practices and policies impact transnational teacher experiences both positively and negatively?
APPENDIX F

ETHICS IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Taking someone’s photo without his/her permission is a violation of privacy so always ask permission

Be transparent regarding the use of the photograph

Don’t take a photo of someone participating in risky or incriminating activities

Ask yourself if the subject would agree to take the photo with the text you intend to write to accompany the photograph

Remember that the subjects are vulnerable to the image, even if they give permission to be photographed

Remember the values and beliefs your photographs depict to the viewer

Don’t share photographs that make you uncomfortable to share of yourself or anyone else

PHOTOGRAPHY THEMES

Possible Themes (Based on Experiences and Research Questions) Family

Country of Origin Culture

Educational Background

Transnational Recruitment

Transnational Experiences: Personal

Transnational Experiences: Professional

Cultural Diversity: Country of Origin/United States

Emergent Themes as determined by participant reflection of experiences

Other: Based on individual experiences

Consider symbolic, dynamic and cross-cultural in nature….photos can display emotions, conflict and/or varying values and practices
APPENDIX G

VISUAL NARRATIVE GUIDE

PHOTOGRAPHY SELECTION:

Participants are asked to choose at least 10 and no more than 20 photographs for their visual narrative project which best represent their experiences as transnational teachers.

PHOTO TITLES:

1) One to Three words
2) Catchy
3) Descriptive

PHOTO NARRATIVES:

1) 3-5 Short sentences as a narrative to describe your photo and its relevance to your experiences.

Prompts for writing the narrative

   a. What does the photo tell us about your experiences?
   b. Why did you select the photograph?
   c. What is happening in the photograph?
   d. What does the photograph make you think or feel?

2) Only include names if you have permission.

3) Include the date that the photograph was taken in your description or title.

PRESENTATION OF VISUAL NARRATIVE:

1) Participant will work with researcher to select a digital format that they are familiar or comfortable using such as a Power Point, Prezi, Articulate, Animoto, etc. format

2) Presentation of project should take 10-20 minutes
All data will be protected by passwords only known to research participants. Any data shared with the researcher will be treated as confidential and protected as determined by the IRB.
APPENDIX H

Share Retreat Agenda

8:30-9:00  Arrivial, Breakfast, and Visitation
9:00-9:30  Introductions
9:30-9:50  Echoes of Transnational Teachers: Navigating Cultural Fronts Overview
9:50-10:00 Break
10:00-10:20 Participant Share & Celebration
10:20-10:40 Participant Share & Celebration
10:40-11:00 Participant Share & Celebration
11:00-11:20 Participant Share & Celebration
11:20-11:40 Participant Share & Celebration
11:40-12:30 Lunch & Fellowship
12:30-1:10 Dialogue and Brainstorming Emergent Themes of the Research
1:10-1:10  Break
1:10-2:00  Meaning Making
2:00  Celebrating Transnational Experiences

Adjourn
District Transnational Teacher Action Plan

Overview

This plan is an example of a preliminary transnational plan that a district might consider and implement prior to the consideration of hiring transnational teachers. The plan is intended to communicate a comprehensive overview of possible actions necessary to provide supports to transnational teachers. Districts should evaluate the plan, assess the District’s specific needs, and determine if implementation would be most effective using internal resources or outsourcing to a transnational educational consulting agency. This plan, based on research, is intended as a “living document” subject to change and ultimate design based on the transnational program assessment of the local district.

Anchor Goals

- Enhance, Implement, and maintain a local Transnational Teacher Program that incorporates evidence based policy and practices
- Supply assessment to continually inform transnational teacher policy and practice
- Recognize, respond to, and support the personal and professional needs of transitioning transnational teachers.
- Equip staff to recognize, appropriately support, and supervise transnational teachers
- Create meaningful opportunities for principal and for teacher collaboration focused on teaching
- Support collaboration between general and transnational teachers.
• Consistently promote excellent instruction through a clear vision of expectations communicated through productive feedback to transnational teachers

• Support rigorous and linguistically appropriate instruction

**District Transnational Teacher Support Plan**

**Plan Coordinator(s)**

**Outline of Support**

Phase I: Determine District Need for a Transitional Teaching Program
Phase II: Pre-Hiring Plan
Phase III Recruitment, Interview, and Placement Process
Phase IV Transnational Transition Supports
Phase V: Organizational Supports
Phase VI: Transnational Mentor Plan
Phase VII: Ongoing Supports and Annual Follow-Up

**District Action Team:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Representatives</th>
<th>Campus Representatives</th>
<th>Transnational Representative(s)</th>
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**District Transnational Committee:**

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<tr>
<th>District Representatives</th>
<th>Campus Representatives</th>
<th>Transnational Representative(s)</th>
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</table>
**Phase I: Determine District Need for a Transitional Teaching Program**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline/Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine Transnational Staffing Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Principals</td>
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<td>Curriculum Department</td>
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<td>Bilingual Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Transnational Teacher Policy, Programs, and Practices</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine Positions</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Principals</td>
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<td>– Certifications</td>
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<td>Curriculum Department</td>
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<td>Bilingual Department</td>
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**Phase II: Pre-Hiring Plan**

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<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish District Transnational Committee</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Principal Representatives:</td>
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<td>Curriculum Department</td>
<td>• Elementary</td>
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<td>Bilingual Department</td>
<td>• Middle School</td>
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<td>• High School Transnational</td>
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<td>Action Step</td>
<td>Contact Person(s)</td>
<td>District Resources and Commitments</td>
<td>Campus Resources and Commitments</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Transnational Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td>HR/Finance Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transnational Program Expenses</td>
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<td>• Training Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mentor Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generate District Hiring Guidelines</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transnational VISA Requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Certification – Highly Qualified</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transnational Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craft Transnational Teacher Handbook/Guide</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Principal Representatives:</td>
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<td>• Visa Process</td>
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<td>Transnational Representative</td>
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<td>• Hiring and Placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transition Preparation Information</td>
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<td>Construct Online Information Resource</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Transnational Representatives</td>
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<td>• Transnational Teacher Vignettes</td>
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<td>• District Educational Videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Step</td>
<td>Contact Person(s)</td>
<td>District Resources and Commitment(s)</td>
<td>Campus Resources and Commitments</td>
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<td>Curriculum - Programs - Testing • Local City Government Links</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design District Transnational Mentor Program • Qualifications of Mentors • Calendar of Academic Supports • Calendar of Mentor Events</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development Department</td>
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</table>
## Phase III: Recruitment, Interview, and Placement Process

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<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Recruiting Agency</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selection of Interview Team Members (if not a recruiting agency)</td>
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<td>HR Department Bilingual Department</td>
<td>Transnational Representative(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Interview Protocol</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<td>Create Recruitment Brochures</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produce Interview Informational Guide</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop Hiring Process Guide for Transnational Teachers</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote District Online Forum for newly hired Transnational Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee Technology Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organize a Welcoming/Placement Interview Event</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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- District Welcome
- All Participating Campuses
- Transnational Teachers as Event Guides
## Phase IV: Transnational Transition Supports

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Creation of Arrival Schedule and Orientation Calendar</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<td>Summer</td>
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<td>- Summer Arrival Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Transnational Orientation Schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>- District Orientation Schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish Transnational Housing Sponsors</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<td>July-October</td>
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<td>- Temporary/Long Term</td>
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<td>July-July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish Transnational Transportation Sponsors</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
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<td>July-September</td>
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<td>- Temporary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a Transnational Relocation Guide</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td>Transnational Representatives</td>
<td>Provided Upon</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Housing</td>
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<td>Hiring</td>
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<td>- Transportation</td>
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<td>- Utilities</td>
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<td>- Banking</td>
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<td>- etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assign District Transnational Mentor</td>
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<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Transnational Teacher</td>
<td>Provided Upon</td>
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<td>- 1 to 5 Ratio (recommended)</td>
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<td>Hiring</td>
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<td>- District Proximity Consideration (if Urban)</td>
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<td>Action Step</td>
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<td>• Grade Level Consideration</td>
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<td>Create District Transnational Cohort</td>
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<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td>Transnational Representative/Bloggers</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cohort Blog/Twitter</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Calendar of Events</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Pláticas</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create District Transnational Website</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td>Transnational Representative/Bloggers</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal Assistance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Professional Assistance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Phase V: Organizational Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Administrative Transnational Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development Department Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online/Face-2-Face Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver Relationship/Team Collaboration Training</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development Department</td>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Instructional Meeting with Transnational Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weekly Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a Professional Development Plan for each Transnational Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>As Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic: Curriculum/Testing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Behavior: Systems/Interventions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Special Programs: GT/SPED: Modifications and Accommodations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote Authentic Cultural Initiatives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 x Annually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create Campus Cultural/Communication Center to provide time and encourage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>contact with families abroad</td>
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</table>
## Phase VI: Transnational Mentor Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Ongoing Mentor Support Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transnational Mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly Bi-Weekly Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain Meeting Logs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinate Group Events</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td>Campus Administration</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Walking/Hiking Tours</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transnational Mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cycling Tours</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore Local Venues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Restaurants</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Farmers Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cultural Centers/Museums</td>
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</table>

## Phase VII: Ongoing Supports and Annual Follow-Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Contact Person(s)</th>
<th>District Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Campus Resources and Commitments</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Transnational 3 Day Summer Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td>District Transnational Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


