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**“The socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers
in a Mexican EFL context”**

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Isaac Frausto Hernández

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DIRECTORA DE TESIS:

Dra. Irasema Mora Pablo

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Abstract

Con la presente tesis, se pretende adaptar la teoría socio-cultural al proceso de construcción y reconstrucción de identidad de un grupo de alumnos transnacionales quienes ejercen como profesores de inglés. Nueve alumnos participantes (cuatro mujeres y cinco hombres) fueron seleccionados con la única condición de ser transnacionales; es decir, haber vivido en ambos México y Estados Unidos por un periodo de tiempo significativo. Se apegó a un enfoque cualitativo utilizando entrevistas semi-estructuradas con el propósito de extraer, entender e interpretar la información en cuanto a las experiencias de vida de los participantes.

Se llegó a la conclusión de que ciertamente, la sociedad y la cultura envolvente juegan un rol muy importante en cuanto al proceso de construcción y reconstrucción de identidad de este grupo de alumnos transnacionales. Tanto la sociedad como la cultura ayudan al transnacional a inicialmente entenderse a sí mismo(a) para luego lograr captar cómo es percibido(a) por la sociedad, ayudando a construir y/o reconstruir facetas de identidad tales como una identidad personal, una identidad social, una identidad cultural y una identidad profesional.

Aunque diferentes facetas de identidad puedan ser construidas por cada persona, ésta puede ser temporal, ya que puede reconstruirse simultáneamente en cuanto a dónde se encuentra la persona, con quien se comunica la persona, y las experiencias por las cuales la persona está pasando.

Dedication

For my family: my parents Clementina and Miguel, my sister Maria del Carmen, my brother Aaron, my niece Kaylee, my nephew Aaron Isaias, my brother-in-law Hugo, and my sister-in-law Laura, who have helped form a close family, and who have been there for me, believed in me and have provided me with endless support.

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The research project carried out for this thesis aims to explore the socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers within a Mexican English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general idea of the research question focused on for this project. I will explain the reasons of this research and the motivation that led me to explore the intended topic. A general overview of the thesis will also be presented.

1.2 My Motivation

I was born in the city of Leon, Guanajuato, and raised in Romita, a small town also in the state of Guanajuato where both of my parents are natives from. This city is located near “the heart of Guanajuato” (a region which encompasses Leon, Silao, Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, and Dolores Hidalgo) and adjoins to Irapuato, Silao, Cueramaro, and Leon. A large percentage of the population of Romita migrates to the neighboring northern country in search of the “American dream”. Those who have settled their legal status most often return back to Romita mainly for the religious festivities taken place in December of each year.

At an early age, my family and I migrated to the United States. We settled in the Salem-Keizer area of Oregon. As the years went by, I had the opportunity to migrate back and forth between both neighboring countries, engaging in transnational practices.

A transnational is a person who engages in considerable life experiences on both sides of the border with personal and family attachments in two different national contexts (in this case Mexico and the United States) (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Petron, 2003; Sánchez, 2009). I consider myself a transnational due to my experiences migrating between both countries. I was able to become familiar with lifestyles of those on either side of the border, and I believe that both sides “feel like home” (Petron, 2009, p. 116).

As I developed as a transnational, that is, migrating between both countries and living on both for a substantial amount of time, the society played a vital role as a support system to better adapt myself to the place in which I was in. Nevertheless, the same society on both sides of the border led me to experience certain difficulties to adapt to a certain place. Occasionally, I was not able to fully identify myself with a particular group of people as I

was perceived as portraying certain characteristics which differentiated me from the rest. As I decided to pursue my undergraduate education, I became aware that I was one amongst others who have also undergone similar experiences as they also had the opportunity to develop as transnationals. Unsurprisingly, the State of Guanajuato is known as the main expeller state with over 100 thousand migrants to the United States according to the 2010 *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI, National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information) census. Therefore, interest in the area of migration between Mexico and the United States grew within me.

Identifying, relating to, and gathering with other students within the same educational program whom also had the opportunity to develop as transnationals allowed me to become aware that many of us indeed share similar experiences. Though the experiences I lived may differ from those experiences of others, they often overlap and aid in building connections with one another. Relating to those with similar experiences helped me question about the role that society and culture play in how one constructs his or her identity, and how this is reflected in the teaching practice developing as English teachers. I am interested in exploring the socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers within a Mexican EFL context.

1.3 Review of Background Context of the Study

The closeness of Mexico to its northern neighboring country, the United States, leads to constant migration between both countries. Illegal immigration practices from Mexico citizens towards United States territory has increased conflict in the socio-political relationship between both nations. The experiences of these migrants may vary; successful experiences may lead to establishing within the country, whereas unsuccessful experiences in the United States may lead to higher return migration. As a way to rely on their English language dominance, some of these return migrants may choose to develop as English teachers.

A number of research projects have been carried out regarding the process of transnationals becoming English teachers (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Petron, 2003; Petron, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014). Nonetheless, it is important to note that these research projects have been carried out on borderlands areas.

However relatively recent research has aimed on the spotlight of the transnational phenomena and those who develop as such and choose to become English teachers in Mexico (Mora Pablo, Lengeling, & Basurto Santos, 2015; Mora Pablo, Lengeling, Rivas Rivas, Basurto Santos & Villareal Ballestros, 2015; Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling & Crawford, 2015; Mora Pablo, Frausto Hernández & Rangel Gamiño, 2016; Rivas Rivas, 2013; Villegas Torres & Mora Pablo, 2015). A large part of this research has been carried out in Guanajuato and collaborating contexts.

The transnational phenomena of those who opt to become English teachers can be considered the core of this research project. It is vital to consider the high immigration statistics, and also consider the return migration that the State of Guanajuato relates to with the northern neighboring country as such provides the opportunities for transnationals to engage in transnational migratory experiences between both the United States and Mexico.

1.4 Purpose of This Study

During my time as an undergraduate and graduate student, I have had the opportunity to encounter, meet, and maintain contact with other transnationals. I noticed that most conversations focus on retelling past experiences lived as such transnationals. Occasionally, some conversations recalled reminiscing difficult situations lived developing as a transnational. This led me to question whether or not these people were aware of the role that society and culture played in their identity construction process. The purpose of my study is to provide possible information regarding how transnational English teachers developing as such in a Mexican EFL context construct their identity from a socio-cultural perspective.

This research aims at adapting the socio-cultural theory as a theoretical framework in order to understand the identity formation of transnationals developing as English teachers in a Mexican EFL context from a particular perspective. This serves as a lens in exploring the role that society and culture may play in the process of constructing and reconstructing the identity of the participants, which will be attempted to be highlighted. It is vital to note that this lens will help me view the data provided by the participants as an external researcher, not including myself as an active participant within the research.

This research project also aims at contributing to give greater emphasis to the transnationalism phenomena and how English teachers go about in their teaching practice

relying on their past migrating experiences. A theoretical framework is taken and adapted to give an alternative approach to the process of identity construction of a group of people with particular characteristics.

1.5 The Research Question

The following question will be taken as the basis to guide this research project and aims to be answered once concluding the research project:

How do transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context construct their identity based upon a socio-cultural perspective?

As mentioned previously, the purpose of this investigation seeks to explore the role that society and culture play in the process of identity construction of transnationals developing as English teachers in a Mexican EFL context.

1.6 The Research Site

This research was carried out in the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato. This university offers a BA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) degree. Recently, an MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching (ALETL) degree opened within the same campus. The research site will be described in further detail in chapter three.

Many transnational students decide to join the BA program as an option to rely on their proficiency in the English language to become English teachers, and continue on with their graduate education in the MA program to pursue higher education within the field. Being involved in some research projects along with some professors helped me relate to other transnationals who are enrolled in both the BA and the MA program.

For the purpose of this research project, approximately twenty-two transnational students were invited to take part of the study. Out of the twenty-two participants which were initially considered, only nine accepted to be part of the study. The participants are all students from the BA TESOL and the MA ALELT programs, enrolled in the different offering semesters. The age of the students ranges from nineteen to forty years old. The main characteristic for the selection of the participants was for them to have engaged in Mexico-

United States transnational experiences; that is, for them to have lived in both Mexico and the United States for a considerable amount of time.

1.7 General Overview

The central idea of Chapter One is to establish the foundation of my research. This investigation is concerned with the socio-cultural identity formation of transnational English teachers developing in a Mexican EFL context. This chapter first gave a brief introduction, followed by my motivation to do this research, the background context of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question, and concludes with a brief focus of the research site.

Chapter Two relates to literature which is considered pertinent for this research project. The Mexico-United States socio-political relationship is first covered, followed by the socio-cultural theory, an overview of identity and several conceptions of such, in addition to the notion of culture (also including the hybrid and the third culture), transnationalism (including transnational communities, transnationals, and the transnational English teacher), in addition to small cultures and communities of practice.

Chapter Three depicts the methodology under which this research project was carried out by, as well as the data gathering technique, the data organization and coding, my positioning as a researcher (not as an active participant), as well as a description of the participants and ethic-related considerations.

Chapter Four provides the themes which emerged from the data along with the given analysis and interpretation.

Finally, in Chapter Five, a general conclusion will be presented, as well as limitations and implications of the findings provided by this research and some ideas for possible future research.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide pertinent literature related to aspects relevant to this research project. As made reference to in Chapter 1, this study attempts to explore the role that society and culture play for transnational English teachers in the process of constructing and/or reconstructing their identity while developing as English teachers throughout the State of Guanajuato, Mexico. The context in which this research project took place is the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato in Guanajuato, Mexico. I also aim to present literature that concerns presenting historical information about the Mexico-U.S. socio-political relationship, providing information about the socio-cultural theory, and defining several types of identity, culture (including the hybrid and third culture), the transnational English teacher, and small cultures and communities of practice.

Several concepts are listed below that are regarded as highly important for the development of this research. These concepts are:

- Mexico-U.S. Socio-political Relationship
- Socio-cultural Theory
- Identity and Identity Formation
- The Notion of Culture
- Transnationalism
- Small Cultures and Communities of Practice

2.2 Mexico-U.S. Socio-political Relationship

Although the history of both Mexico and the neighboring United States shares a difficult socio-political relationship (Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2015), migration is constant as both countries are proximal to each other. As this research focuses on the socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers developing in a Mexican EFL context, it is relevant to provide information about the Mexico-U.S. socio-political relationship.

Historically, demographic changes in Mexico have played a key role in defining the dynamics of unregulated Mexican migration to the United States (Romo, 2016). Vila (2000)

provides historical background of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, which were one city until 1848 when the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty divided it, although not dividing the economic and social relationships between both cities in the same way. The strong relationship between both cities was strengthened during the first part of the twentieth century as the years of Prohibition in the United States not only started the growing tourist industry in Juárez (Martínez, 1994), but also allowed the formation of a new social group. The smuggling of alcoholic beverages from factories installed on the Mexican side of the border favored the accumulation of some Mexicans who over the years became major political and economic actors (Lau, 1986). At the same time, not only had the bourgeoisie established a strong economic relationship with the United States, but also most cities on the Mexican side of the United States and Mexico border became closely linked to the neighboring cities on the other side of the border (Vila, 2000).

On December 17th, 1992, the eve of the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was supposed to improve the relations between the United States and Mexico, the U.S. Border Patrol in El Paso implemented a new strategy called “Operation Blockade” to deter the influx of undocumented immigrants into the United States with visible positions along the international boundary (Vila, 2000). This initiative was implemented by Silvestre Reyes, a Mexican American who grew up in a small town near El Paso, and won large support (ibid). During a close period of elections, El Paso not only did not have any major rally, but elected Silvestre Reyes, the mastermind behind “Operation Blockade”, as the Democratic candidate for Congress beating his opponent Jose Luis Sánchez in both rounds (ibid). Silvestre Reyes based his campaign on the status he had gained as the city’s hero because he had been who supposedly put an end to illegal immigration from Mexico (ibid).

Immigration has long been considered a vehicle for increasing the pool of workers during labor shortages throughout the United States (Clavita, 1992). An example of recruitment of Mexican workers to the United States was the Bracero Program which lasted from 1942 to 1964 (approximately), and allowed Mexican guest workers to mitigate the U.S. wartime labor shortage (Romo, 2016). Negotiations between Washington and Mexico City collapsed in the latest round of the Bracero accords, which since World War II had provided

for the legal importation of hundreds of thousands of contracted workers to fulfill labor shortages primarily in the agricultural fields (Fitzgerald, 2008).

As a response to the uncontrolled unauthorized immigration arriving to the U.S., in 1986, the United States Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which regulated 3.2 million undocumented immigrants, out of which approximately 2.3 million were from Mexico (Romo, 2016). IRCA also implemented measures to strengthen border controls and increase sanctions on U.S. employers who hired undocumented workers (ibid). As a result of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, migration became linked to the national security of the U.S., and undocumented immigration was increasingly criminalized (ibid).

In the months before the devastating terrorist account on September 11th, 2001, Mexico's President Vicente Fox and the President of the United States George W. Bush had begun discussions on migration, mutually agreeing upon bilateral strategies negotiated to regulate Mexico-U.S. migration; however,

In the following years, the U.S. experienced an economic recession, beginning during the Bush administration and continuing into the Obama administration, causing a high rate of unemployment in the U.S. and heightening the anti-immigration sentiment in the U.S. U.S. policy concerns turned to border security, the detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants, and prevention of additional terrorist attacks. Controlling undocumented immigration remained a deep concern. (Romo, 2016, p. 2)

Although official U.S. policy was to deter illegal immigration, the U.S. Border Patrol often gave a blind eye to unauthorized crossers or enforced the letter of the law while violating its spirit by allowing undocumented workers to enter the country and work in the fields (Fitzgerald, 2008). Fifty years after the end of the Bracero Program, the scene on the two thousand mile U.S.-Mexican border has changed dramatically: on the U.S. side, drones monitor the desert below, the National Guard and nearly ten thousand border agents monitor the walls and fences of the border, while on the Mexican side, rather than pulling back prospective crossers, the Mexican border police is believed to hand out booklets to the thousands of citizens in the look for trailing north, warning them about the dangers of entering illegally into the neighboring country and also providing them with practical tips about crossing safely and avoiding apprehension on U.S. territory (ibid).

Migration between Mexico and the United States is “the largest sustained flow of migrant workers in the contemporary world” (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pelegrino & Taylor, 1998, p.73). Mexican immigrant families and communities, living within and across two nation-states, experience both fluidity and divisions, and their lives both transcend and are separated by this international division (Boehm, 2012). Moreover, Mexicans’ exposure to their northern neighbor takes place on a massive scale: twenty five percent of the Mexican adult population has visited or lived in the United States, and sixty percent has a relative living there (Fitzgerald, 2008). It is evident that ties are maintained between relatives on both sides of the border.

It is important to note that several elements are important to consider when exploring border crossing and length of stay in the United States. Boehm (2012) mentions that:

Different subjectivities, experiences, and circumstances- based on legal status, as well as age, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, access to resources, race/ethnicity, marital status, and family ties- intersect with political-economic realities, shaping who migrates; if, when, and how often they do so; and the character of their border crossings and lengths of stay in the United States. (p. 4)

This migration leads to intimate relationships of how families transcend and are divided by the U.S.-Mexico border, how gender subjectivities are transforming and being reasserted, how gender and power relations among migrants operate both within and outside of the force of U.S. state, and how age may traverse with U.S. immigration status (Boehm, 2012). Furthermore, it is also important to note that this transnationalism is also chronic in that it is persistent, ongoing, and continuous although it is never uniform, homogenous, nor predictable, as for centuries, the extended U.S. Mexico borderlands have been characterized by diverse migrations (ibid). Kearney (1991) argues that transnationalism implies a blurring, a reordering of the binary cultural, social and epistemological distinctions of the modern period where the nation-state established a well-marked differentiation between “us” and “them”.

The idea of border crossing may not seem to portray the overall elements embedded in such activity. As Wilson and Donnan (1998) note, “only the idea of border as an image of cultural juxtaposition has entered wider anthropological discourse” (p.6). This leads to question the discourse related to border and its derivations. Vila (2000) argues that the metaphor of crossing borders may be complemented with another one referring to reinforcing

borders or something similar as many people do not want to cross those borders or live “on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.i). This position may lead to viewing the borderlands as a hybrid way of thinking represented as a utopia one has to appreciate and struggle for on the border because identity is a strange sedimentation of the past, present, and future, and is already present in some border actors (Vila, 1997). In this sense, borderlands juxtapose several identity conceptions for its members to arrive to a new understanding of how they view themselves.

A peculiar characteristic of the Mexico-U.S. border is that the people changing countries are not only crossing from one country to another, but are also moving from one national system of classification to the another (Vila, 2000). In changing their country of residence, immigrants expose themselves to a new set of expectations about their attitudes and behaviors, expectations to which they must respond by constructing a social identity that has meaning in this new, and perhaps unknown, social context (Vila, 1997).

Scholars have claimed that the main process of identity construction on the Mexican side of the border is the constitution of the Anglos as the “others” (Bustamante, 1983; Lozano, 1990). On the American side of the border, racial, ethnic, and national discourses organize social identity (Vila, 1997). Furthermore, as Wilson and Donnan (1998) point out:

One of the most obvious, and perhaps most problematic, situations in which people’s national identity must be negotiated is where a border is drawn with little reference to the ties of blood and/or culture which in some cases bind those across its reaches... Those living in these border areas must evolve a *modus vivendi* which incorporates contradictory identities.
(p. 13)

Thus, arriving to a comprehensible conception of identity may be difficult to reach as those migrating between two locations may constantly negotiate who they are.

Contemporary migration is split between those who have high human capital (such as university professionals, technicians and entrepreneurs), and those with low human capital (who are less or poorly scholarly educated workers) (Romo, 2016). First generation migrants are a mobile population; that is, they often return to their home country or move back and forth as compared to their children, who often stay in the United States and claim their rights as full members of U.S. society (Passel et al., 2014). However, changes in U.S. laws and policies have led to increased criminalization of undocumented immigrants and have had important impacts on immigrant incorporation (Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2014).

Within transnational communities, there is a growing number of U.S. citizen children whose parents are unauthorized migrants (Boehm, 2012). While the current residence of such children and youth is determined by the migration trajectories of their families, in the future these children will be able to “come and go” more easily than their parents (ibid). Nonetheless, the presence of the U.S. is strong in everyday lives, evident through the categories that may define and exclude members of the nation, as well as growing border controls, an increasing number of deportations of Mexican nationals, and shifting U.S. immigration policies (ibid). Despite of the situation, transnational Mexicans, regardless of their migratory status in the United States, are building lives and families outside of state control, challenging the state power, the experiences of Mexican migrant families uncover the strong hold of the state (ibid).

As a response to the countless immigrants living throughout the United States, President Barack Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) granted protection from deportation and the possibility to apply for a work permit to those brought to the United States as children by undocumented workers, amongst other qualifications (Romo, 2016). This initiative, on June 15th, 2012, gave approximately 1.7 million eligible undocumented young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty the opportunity to receive a two-year work authorization and protection from deportation (Romo, 2016). Shortly, in November 2014, President Barack Obama issued another order to expand eligibility for DACA and protecting the undocumented parents of children who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents from deportation (Hirschfeld Davis, 2014). This in turn allowed the undocumented parents a possibility for them to work legally within U.S. territory, though that may no longer be the case with reform proposals by the new U.S. president.

Nonetheless, the numbers of return migrants in Mexico have increased due to reduced economic opportunities in the northern neighboring country and enforcement of deportations by the U.S. Office of Homeland Security (Romo, 2016). Mexican returnees and deportees have received little attention although this phenomenon has existed throughout the history of the Mexico-U.S. border (ibid). As a result, the Mexican government and local communities where these return migrants end up are struggling to reincorporate them into the Mexican education system and workforce and to provide the social services they need (ibid).

Today, there are many social and economic factors in play in Mexico (insecurity, economic challenges, a culture of migration, and social network ties across the Mexico-U.S. border) that influence emigration patterns (Romo, 2016). Also, it is important to consider that:

The borderlands of the U.S. Southwest, once territory of Mexico, and the northern Mexico states share a regional economic and cultural environment and a long history of movement of people, goods, and services across the border. Many of the people of Mexican origin living in the United States continue to identify as Mexicans or Mexican Americans after many generations in the United States; others brought to the United States as children feel strongly that they are Americans, even if they lack official documents that support that identity. As the United States begins to acknowledge the importance of the growing Latino population in terms of political participation, economic resources, workforce contributions, and cultural influences, increasing attention will be drawn to U.S.-Mexico relations. (Romo, 2016, p. 8)

In this sense, understanding those factors as well as the political, economic, and social conditions in the United States shaping U.S. immigration policies is essential (Romo, 2016).

I will now focus the scope on the migration practices of the State of Guanajuato, Mexico. The first Guanajuato migrants to the United States became workers of the railroad construction beginning in Chicago, followed by the “Braceros” program from 1942 to 1964, where approximately 4.5 million Mexicans were called in by the neighboring Northern country to fulfill the jobs in the agricultural fields (Lamy, 2015). This program opened up the doors for constant migration of Guanajuato natives to the United States.

Concerning the 2015 *Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica* (National Census of Demographic Dynamics) of the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information) census, Guanajuato is positioned as the fourth immigrant expeller state to the United States just below Michoacán, Guerrero, and Nayarit. Constantly raising issues in political, economic, and migratory situations for undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States encourages return migration to their native homelands. In 2016, an estimated 14 thousand Guanajuato natives returned back to Mexico (INEGI, 2017).

Boehm (2012) highlights that when questioning individuals about a scenario in which there are no barriers to movement between Mexico and the United States, there is a preference over a freedom to “go and come”, ideally being in both countries and “create lives that are

... from both sides” (p. 3); that is, as transnational migrants, an ideal situation seems to be that in which one can continuously engage in migrating back and forth between both “homes” and continue to maintain ties on both sides of the border.

One can argue that indeed “Mexican migration to the United States is unique, and it is imperative that the United States and Mexico collaborate in developing immigration policies that serve the needs of people and promote economic prosperity in both countries” (Romo, 2016, p.8). In other words, a scenario in which the United States and Mexico work in partnership can lead not only to more economic prosperity between both countries, but more familiar ties between both countries as well. The legal status of immigrants is imperative to consider as such can lead to more continuous migration between both countries. In the next section, the socio-cultural theory will be focused on.

2.3 Socio-cultural Theory

Having discussed the socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States, and also having made reference to the migration practices of the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, I now turn to discuss the socio-cultural theory as a theoretical foundation and perspective which will be taken for the process of identity construction of the participants of this research project.

The socio-cultural theory was initially proposed by Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1987), who made reference to the human learning processes in general. Johnson (2009) argued that human behavior and learning is a dynamic social activity, situated in a certain physical and social context, and that is distributed across people, tools, and activities. The core of socio-cultural theory is that learning and cognitive development happen as a result of social interactions; that is, “the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within social and material environments” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.201). The socio-cultural theory considers language as an important mediational tool in the development of higher mental processes of learners (Vygotsky, 1986). Language helps the progress of these processes by enabling the development of communicative and cognitive functions to move from a social to a personal level (Vygotsky, 1987). Hence, it is vital for a person to engage in and maintain interaction with other people and communicative artefacts within their environment for further development in their cognitive processes.

The socio-cultural theory proposes several constructs out of which I wish to highlight the constructs of mediation, internalization, and imitation, which I consider relevant to the process of identity formation.

With regards to mediation, Vygotsky (1978, 1981, 1987) acknowledged that the human mind was comprised of a lower-level neurological base, but the distinctive dimension of human consciousness was its capacity for control over biological factors through the use of higher level cultural tools such as language, literacy, numeracy, categorization, rationality, and logic. These higher level cultural tools serve as a barrier between the person and the environment and act to mediate the relationship between the individual and the social-material world (ibid). In this sense, tools can be seen as culturally constructed objects which instill humans with more ability than natural grants alone (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). I argue that language is the highest of all higher level cultural tools. As such, language being culturally constructed, may help one relate more to certain people than others in feeling a sense of belongingness with others due to linguistic choice and usage. Within the diverse cases of the participants of this study, the exposure to and usage of both languages played an important role in not only adapting, but also relating to and feeling a sense of belonging with a group of people.

Regulation is one form of mediation as one may subordinate their own behavior to the speech of others (Vygotsky, 1978). By interacting with others, our own linguistic activity may be regulated by others. As one continues to gain more awareness of those who regulate our linguistic activity, one relies on certain linguistic choices that may determine one's projection towards others. Another type of mediation is done through symbolic artefacts (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1987). As humans have the capacity to use symbols as tools, these symbolic artefacts may be the ways in which the participants project themselves.

A second construct of the socio-cultural theory is internalization. Winegar (1997) describes internalization as a negotiated process that reorganizes the relationship of the individual to his or her social environment, and may carry it on into future performance. Furthermore, internalization accounts for the connection between social communication and mental activity through which we gain control over our thinking (Yaroshevsky, 1989). By internalizing how one's social environment functions, one may become more aware of social practices and norms that relate to the society in which one develops in.

A third construct of the socio-cultural theory is imitation. Imitation involves goal directed cognitive activity than can result in transformations derived from the original model (Tomasello, 1999). As Vygotsky (1987) states, “development based on collaboration and imitation is the source of all the specifically human characteristics of consciousness...” (p. 210). With regards to such, one may arrive to an understanding that collaboration based on original models provided by the surrounding society may shape our consciousness of that same society, feeling identified with it or not.

The socio-cultural theory was considered for this research project as the participants all share experiences migrating back and forth between Mexico and the United States. Through the process of migrating between both countries, interactions with the surrounding society became crucial as a way for the participants to better understand new cultural circumstances and facilitate their adaptation process to either location. The option to make use of the available linguistic resources was a mediating tool for the participants of this research to become part of a larger social gathering. Although the adaptation processes were not the same for all of the participants in this research project, being able to recall their own experiences helped them relate more to each other and rely on their own experiences to become better adapted to a new settling location. These experiences lived by each are what helped construct their identity, which will be focused on in the following section.

2.4 An Overview of Identity

Considering the purpose of this study, identity may be taken as a central element, as the lived experiences of the participants shape how they view themselves, how they are viewed by others, and how they can better identify with others.

The introduction of the term “identity” into social analysis and its initial diffusion in the social sciences and public discourse took place in the United States during the 1960s (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). An important trajectory involved the appropriation and popularization of the term “identity crisis” coined by Erikson (1968), which made reference to identity as a way to denote an individual’s sense of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image, a sense of being and becoming. In a brief sense, Erikson (1968) described identity as “a subjective sense of an invigorating sameness and continuity” (p. 19).

Erickson's identity theory reflects a "mathematized view of the world" (Crotty, 2003, p. 27), where identity is found in a pathway of inevitable and continuous progress. It is also an essentialist view of human experience, since it is expected that every person would experience a set of stages in the same order and develop a new virtue out of the successful resolution of the conflict in each stage (Trejo Guzmán, 2010).

From the late 1960s on, with the rise of the Black Power and other ethnic movements for which it served as a template concerned with individual identity, the concept of identity became linked to Erickson's notion of "communal culture", transposed to the group level (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Identity shortly became linked to the concept of "self" (ibid).

The work of Vygotsky is also believed to have provided highly useful basis for understanding how identity formation processes evolve according to a more modernist tradition (Zembylas, 2003). Vygotsky did not make reference specifically to identity; yet, his sociological and anthropological view of human development assigns a significant role to the interaction between individuals and the culture which they emerge from with unique traits (Trejo Guzmán, 2010). Such work from Vygotsky lead to a more socio-cultural understanding of identity formation applied in the educational field by Wertsch (1985) and Van der Veer (2007), amongst others.

Already in the mid-1970s, the term "identity" was said to be driven out by its overuse (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). In the 1980s, with the rise of topics such as race, class, and gender in literary criticisms and cultural studies, the humanities field joined the dispute with strong force (ibid).

Another term of identity grew out of the structural symbolic interactionism perspective (Stryker, 1980) in which identity was now used in a sense of being viewed both as a social category and as a unique individual.

Giddens (1991) proposed a more modern perception towards identity, claiming that modern society confronts the self with different dilemmas in which successful resolutions enable the individual to develop a more coherent identity. In this sense, identity formation is no longer perceived as a process that happens independently of people's lived experiences (Trejo Guzmán, 2010). Giddens (1976) argues that, although context and society may be a constraining force for the development of the self-identity, each individual person actively incorporates distinct elements of mediated experiences into their selfhood and, therefore, into

their identities. Furthermore, Giddens (1991) places special emphasis on the role that reflexivity plays in identity construction, arguing that it is through a reflective process that individuals become capable of taking certain features from their lived experiences in the real world and are able to incorporate them into the biographical narratives that constitute their identities.

Nonetheless, identity related aspects continue to proliferate today (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). A postmodern view of self and identity contends that it is impossible to claim an origin of self and identity within traditions that consider them as simply neurological, psychological or sociological issue (Trejo Guzmán, 2010). Foucault (1984) sustains that modern society is a disciplinary society that exerts control over people through three distinct means: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination. It is through these modern disciplining tools that behavior, knowledge and self, and identity are subject to maintain the status quo (Trejo Guzmán, 2010). Identity, for Foucault (1984), is one more disciplining concept used by the social sciences with the purpose of forcing the individual to remain static within a set of fixed boundaries, arguing for the dissolution of identity.

Postmodernism presents us with a self that is in continuous construction and reconstruction through discursive practices in which identity is understood as a dialogical concept which emerges out of the inter-subjective worlds in which people are submersed in (Biesta, 1994). Therefore, language and discourse play a pivotal role in identity formation since they are the mediums through which individuals are able to exercise power and resist the disciplining tools of modernity; identity then is an interpretation and is constantly subject to revision (Trejo Guzmán, 2010).

For Stets and Burke (2000), identity has at its core “the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations of that role and its performance” (p.2). In this sense, identity focuses on helping one take on a role, being aware of all of the elements involved in undertaking that particular role.

Norton (2006) presents a sociocultural conception of identity, arguing that this position conceives identity as dynamic and constantly changing across time and place. Identity then, can be in constant change influenced by the period of time being lived at a certain location and the place where the individual is at.

Skeggs (2008) takes on a different stance and denotes that identity may be simultaneously a category, a social position, and an effect. Such can be viewed relating to how a person may be categorized in relation to others, positioned amongst the society, and the effects that relating to a particular social group may depict.

Norton (2013) defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 45). The various aspects of the concept of identity come together in the afore-mentioned definition as the person not only understands him or herself, but is also able to foresee future options and possibilities.

For the purposes of this thesis, the more modern and post-modern views towards identity are taken as a lens to view into the lived experiences of the participants, and how they construct and reconstruct a facet of their identity. I define identity as the projection that a person has of him or herself considering his or her past experiences, and how these experiences play an important role in how the person is perceived and is able to relate to others in various contexts and situations.

Identity is a vital element in this research project. What each of the participants has lived results in the construct of how they view and how they incorporate themselves in relation to the external world. Several conceptions of identity will now be presented.

2.4.1 Self-identity

The concept of self-identity (also referred to as personal identity, Santos & Sia, 2007) is also pertinent to this research project concerning the fact that the participants view themselves in a particular manner regarding their past experiences. Several perspectives have been presented. As the concept of identity developed from the concept of the self, I consider important to initially make reference to the concept of the self.

Burke (1980) notes that the concept of self is the set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. Such conceptual meanings are based on the observations of oneself, our inferences about who one is, the inferences of how others may act towards one, one’s wishes and desires, and the evaluations one has of oneself (ibid). The concept of the self not only includes the idealized views of who one is, but also the constantly changing views that one has based on different situations one may encounter.

Erez and Earley (1993) argue that people everywhere are likely to develop an understanding of themselves as physically distinct and separate from others; that is, people tend to view themselves as being different and unique from others. This conception may lead to arriving to an understanding of what can be referred to as self-identity.

Giddens (1991) describes the self-identity related to how the person views him or herself in regards to past events through a process of reflection. In other words, one's self-identity can be seen as the perception of the self as reflexively understood by the person with regards to his or her biography or lived experiences (ibid). It is the individual who has more knowledge of his or her own past experiences. These past experiences are crucial in shaping how the person views him or herself in regards to others.

Baumeister (1998) takes a similar stance and refers to self-identity as that which is defined as a unitary and continuous awareness of who one is. He discusses that self-identity is a focus usually being made reference to today, stating that:

We speak of it in these terms because the question is often spontaneously phrased by people in the form: Who am I? But this can't necessarily be answered by giving name and genealogy. What does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand. (ibid, p. 27)

In this sense, arriving to a construction of a self-identity requires for the person to continuously gain awareness of who he or she is.

Santos and Sia (2007) take yet another stance arguing that the individual's identity may not be isolated from the rest. They make reference to personal identity as "a unified pattern that characterizes the historic route of successive occasions of experience, distinct from each other, but not isolable from one another or from the whole" (p.69). Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) also argue that an individual identity requires establishing social relations at some point. They note that:

...identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present- what is true of one now, or the future- the person one expects or wishes to become, the person

one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 69)

With regards to the afore-mentioned, it can be questionable whether or not the self or personal identity is affected by others, and if so, to what extent.

Stryker (1980) argues that because the self emerges in and is reflective of society, the sociological approach to understanding the self and its identities means that we must also aim at understanding the society in which the self is acting, and keep in mind that the self is always acting in a social context in which others are also involved.

The notion of the self-identity is also a crucial aspect of this research project as the participants view themselves differently from others. They each have past experiences that differentiate them amongst one another, yet these past experiences also bring them together in being able to relate to each other. In finding a relationship to others, a social identity may be constructed. The conception of the social identity will be looked at below.

2.4.2 Social Identity

The concept of social identity is also crucial for this research project as it refers to the identity that individuals portray towards the society and social groups. Society also plays an important role in the construction of identity of an individual.

Initially, Layder (2004) argues that “no one can stand apart from the social world” (p.8), that is:

Everyone is influenced by society and it makes its indelible mark on us. It's a great error to think that there is no such thing as society or that we are separate, self-sufficient individuals. Everyone is influenced by family, friends, education, ethnicity, work, class, gender, politics and history. At every point in our lives we both rely on, and contribute to our social environment. (p. 8)

In this sense, society is not separable from the individual. According to the previous stand point, at some moment in time, the individual will be required to interact with the social environment in which he or she develops in.

Social identity theory stresses that individual behavior reflects individuals' larger societal units (Padilla & Perez, 2003). This means that overarching societal structures such as groups, organizations, cultures, and most importantly, individuals' identification with these collective units guide internal structures and processes (ibid). In this sense, Ellemers,

Spears, and Doosje (2002) note that each of us has a range of different social identities, including those derived from highly meaningful and clearly delineated groups, as well as those groups who refer to more abstract and perhaps more ambiguous social categories. In other words, social identities are supported and sustained by a network of social relationships (Abrams, 1992).

Tajfel (1981) provided one of the clearest and most common definitions of social identity, defining it as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 255). Furthermore, Tajfel (1981) argued that social identity has two components: the belief that one belongs to a group, and the importance of that group membership to one’s self. In this sense, the membership of a social group results in a feeling of attachment of one in relation to others. The sense of belonging to a group will play an important role in the perception of the own self.

Norton (2006) made reference to social identity as the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through institutions. Such institutions can be families or social groups, and these play an important role in regards to constructing a social identity (Gumperz, as cited in Norton, 2006). A social identity may then depend largely on the relationship that the individual constructs with a particular institution, which may portray a certain ideology or a set of values towards the individual, possibly influencing his or her identity construction process. In addition, Bucholtz (1999) claims that individuals are viewed as occupying particular social identities throughout their lives by virtue of their position in the social structure. Hence, a particular identity can be occupied regarding the social image that is given to each individual. Thus, society may also impact how the individual’s identities are constructed.

Sarbin and Allen (1968) argued that belonging to a group or to a given social category is highly important, resulting in a codification of social identity as the part of the self, which refers to cognitions ensuing from social positions. Deschamps and Devos (1998) developed a more in-depth argument:

Those who have similar positions and common backgrounds have similar social identities, therefore social identity does indeed refer to the similarity pole. However, the feeling of belonging to a group and the phenomena of identification are only possible in connection with groups or categories one does not belong to. Thus social identity refers to the fact that the individual

perceives him- or herself as similar to others of the same background, but social identity also refers to a difference, to a specificity of that we in connection with members of other groups or categories. We have then a double motion which combines in group similarities and intergroup or categorial differentiation. The stronger the identification with a group, the more significant the differentiation of that group from other groups will be. (pp. 2-3)

In this sense, one's social identity is constructed upon how the individual perceives him or herself in relation to others with regards to similarities and also differences that may be found.

Park (2007) argued that a constructed identity may require the need for modifications and reconstructions, and conceptualized such as “an inherently social product that is jointly created by interactants” (p. 341). In this sense, whom the individual interacts with may greatly influence his or her identity construction process. Society may be in constant change, and the individual may not always interact with the same people within various settings. This may result in a process of continuous construction of each individual's identity, including one's professional identity. The conception of the professional identity will be presented next.

2.4.3 Professional Identity

Being submerged in a field in which the participants are aiming at developing in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics in English language teaching, their professional identity also becomes present in how they project themselves and are viewed by others in a professional environment. The concept of professional identity becomes pertinent for this research project as the participants not only become more aware of who they are in a working environment, but also restructure how they wish to present themselves in such field.

As Wenger (1998) argues “there is a profound connection between identity and practice. Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants” (p.149). In other words, gathering with others who carry out similar practices helps bond with one another maintain the practice that is carried out. This leads to a formation of a professional identity.

Brott and Myers (1999) note that professional identity development is a process rather than an outcome as this begins in training and continues throughout one's career. Similarly,

Kerby (1991) highlighted that identity formation is conceived as an ongoing process that involves both the interpretation and the reinterpretation of experiences as one lives through them. Therefore, Knowles (1992) characterized professional identity as an unclear concept in the sense of what, and to what extent, several elements are integrated in such an identity. Nevertheless, several conceptions of professional identity have been presented:

Professional identity, for Schein (1978), is viewed as one form of social identity, concerning group interactions in the workplace and relates to how people compare and differentiate themselves from other professional groups. Professional identity develops over time and involves gaining insight into the practices and development of the talents and values of the profession (ibid).

Hall (1987) makes reference to professional identity as the set of attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills that are shared with others within a professional group. In this case, a professional identity may be mutually constructed amongst those involved in a professional group.

Watts (1987) refers to professional identity as the role undertaken by the individual, and thus is a matter of the subjective self-conceptualization associated with the work role being adopted. Each role the person assumes can also influence how they construct their professional identity.

Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000), similar to Day (1999), denote professional identity as an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences lived within the professional field. This denotes professional identity as being constantly reconstructed according to the ongoing lived experiences.

In this sense, constructing a professional identity involves being aware of other professional groups, gaining awareness of one's knowledge, skills, and values, undertaking a role, and continuously reinterpreting one's lived experiences developing as professionals.

The notion of the professional identity has recently been extended to a professional identity within the teaching field. As in the case of several notions being presented regarding a professional identity, several conceptions have been presented about the professional identity, particularly in the teaching field:

- Fitzgerald (1993) states “identity is defined as the academic metaphor for self-in-context” (p. 3). In this sense, the self becomes understood according to developing in a professional and academic context.
- Tickle (2000) argues that professional identity not only refers to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, including broadly accepted images within the society about what a teacher should know and do, but this also refers to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on their experiences in practice along with their personal backgrounds. A social and self perspective become crucial in how the person is referred to within the professional academic field.
- Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt (2000) refer to professional identity as how a person perceives him or herself as a teacher and the factors that contribute to these perceptions. As several factors may come into play, each individual’s professional identity may be constructed differently than others.
- Sachs (2001) makes reference to professional identity as the set of attributes that are imposed upon the teaching profession either by outsiders or by members of the teaching fraternity itself. This leads to a shared set of attributes and values that enable the differentiation of one group of professionals from others (ibid). In this sense, professional identity may be imposed, differentiating one group of professionals from another.
- Clandinin and Huber (2005) understand teacher’s professional identity as “a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by, stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which she/he lives and works...” (p. 4). Each person’s past, and what is being lived in a professional field seem to play an important role in how professional identity is constructed.

Thus, a teacher’s professional identity involves being submerged in an academic context, their experiences and backgrounds lived among and brought into their teaching practice, the attributes imposed upon by others within the same profession, and having awareness of the settings in which the teacher develops in.

Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) believe that teachers’ professional identities emerge through their social actions (including the interaction with others) in which the teachers not

only reflect on past events, but also (and perhaps more importantly) consider how these past events may inform future events and activities. This may lead to a set of perceptions created by the teacher's teaching practice. Beijaard et al. (2000) argue that the teachers' perceptions of their own professional identity may affect their efficacy and professional development, as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change, and to implement innovations along their own teaching practice. Nevertheless, there may be factors that may influence in the construction of these perceptions. Some of these influencing factors may be: the teaching context, the teaching experience and the biography of the teacher as a biographical perspective may emphasize identity transformation, the adaptation of personal understandings and ideals to institutional realities, and the decision about the degree of how to express oneself throughout classroom activity (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Various aspects are related in the construction of not only a professional identity, but also a cultural identity, which will be explored next.

2.4.4 Cultural Identity

Another important concept related to this research project is that of a cultural identity. This is important as all of the participants of this research project were in direct contact with more than one culture. For some participants, establishing a preference of one culture over the other helped them feel better adapted to a given society, while for others, this was not the case. It is important to make reference to what cultural identity refers to.

Kumar (2015) notes that human beings "are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance" (p. 332). This is important, as the cultural community in which one develops in provides us with the resources that allow one to make sense of the world and also become aware of phenomenon which can be conceived as being valuable, valueless, moral and immoral (ibid). Culture then "becomes the resource in enhancing and deepening of one's personal faculties of reflection and judgment" (Kumar, 2015, p. 332).

Hall (1990) presents two different ways of thinking about cultural identity; the first kind of cultural identity can be seen as "one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people

with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (quotes in original, p. 223). In this sense, this initial concept of cultural identity refers to the many similarities and experiences one has with others. These similarities come together in joint practices to view a group of people as a social group.

Cultural identity, as viewed in the second way is proposed by Hall (1990) as:

a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (quotes in original, p. 225)

In this sense, the practices in which one develops not only refer to past experiences, but also to future perspectives one would like to obtain. Rather than being a stable construction, it may require constant modifications to fit in with the times and experiences being presented on a continuous basis.

Similar to Hall's (1990) second sense of cultural identity, Alake (2005) presents an analogous stance arguing that cultural identities shift over time due to changes in individual locations within the group's sense of collective belonging and positioning within the wider society. Moreover, Kumar (2015) argues that:

every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. This does not mean that it is devoid of coherence and identity, but that its identity is plural, fluid and open. Cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be their significant other, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitution. (p. 333)

One can arrive to an understanding that cultural identities reflect a set of common practices. These practices may be in constant change and may change depending on where the person is located at and whom he or she has interaction with.

The notion of the cultural identity is crucial in this research project as the participants felt a sense of belonging towards the culture of a larger group of people. This, in turn, also helped them relate more to such group of people and also establish a sense of who they are and how they are viewed by others.

Nevertheless, it is important to also look at the conception of culture. This conception will be focused on next.

2.5 The Notion of Culture

The notion of “culture” is also an important aspect to consider regarding this research project. However, arriving to a single, comprehensible definition of culture is quite difficult to achieve. Kramsch (1998) referred to “culture” from three different perspectives: “1. Membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting. 2. The discourse community itself. 3. The system of standards itself” (p. 127). For Kramsch (1998), having a sense of belonging towards a given culture can be summarized as having similar perceptions regarding certain practices, becoming part of a community and having notion of established social norms and/or standards.

Other definitions of “culture” have been proposed. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) define culture as “the set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experiences shared by a group of people. Culture can also refer to a set of shared beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide the behaviors of a group of people, to explain the world around them, and to solve their problems” (pp. 11-12). Spencer-Oatey (2008) takes a similar stance and makes reference to culture as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behavior and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people’s behavior” (p. 15). Byram (2008) takes on a common perspective to describe culture as “shared beliefs, values and behaviors of a social group” (p. 60). It is important to highlight that the previous definitions of “culture” refer to an aggregate

of people with shared views of the world based on their practices, yet these views do not determine the behavior that each person shall undertake.

Given the complexity of arriving to a single, comprehensible definition of culture, several scholars debate whether the word “culture” should be considered a verb rather than a noun; that is, culture is a dynamic process of actively constructing meaning, therefore it carries the quality of a verb (Street, 1993). This stance led to other perspectives also worthy to consider. Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012) argued that to say that “culture is a verb is to say that culture is not something that you think or possess or live inside of. It is something that you do, and the way that you do it might be different at different times and in different circumstances” (p. 5), arguing that individuals should be able to “use these various ideas about what culture is without being taken in by them, without falling into the trap of thinking that any particular construction of culture is actually something real” (ibid. p. 3).

The notion of “culture” that the participants have is important, as they relate to such to recall practices that they are and became familiar with due to having the opportunity to migrate between both locations. This concept also helps them relate to other people with similar experiences as they rely on those to gain a broader understanding of the norms the society expects them to fulfill. Furthermore, it is this conception of culture that helps the participants relate to each other and feel different from those who do not share the same migrating experiences.

2.5.1 The Hybrid and Third Culture

The ideas of the hybrid and the third culture are considered pertinent for this research project. Initially, it is important to mention that occasionally the participants of this research inquiry felt not fully identified with a particular culture; that is, they felt as the “others”. Spencer (2006) states the following with regards to the “other”:

To a certain extent we are each born into a social system- constantly evolving certainly- but nevertheless a pre-existing molding influence on our behavior and outlook and on our understanding of difference. The ‘Other’ exists as a metaphysical concept rather than as a genuine entity. The ‘Other’ represents an area of consensus, a way of delineating self, and the shared values of our culture or subculture. We create ideals and typifications and the ‘Other’ presents us with tests and measures for these ideals. The process of forging an identity at the individual as well as the

group level is dependent on interaction with others. (quotes in original, p. 8)

In this sense, the “other” represents the society in which the transnationals of this research project are in contact with. The society has a system of shared values and ideologies, yet this same society challenges the transnationals as they do not fully fit in with the rest. Due to their lived experiences, they project themselves differently and are seen as outsiders due to their peculiar characteristics, arriving to the formation of a third or a hybrid culture.

The notion of the hybrid culture derives from Kumaravadivelu’s (2008) concept in which the inherited and the learned culture play an important role in creating a new culture, resulting in uncertainty as to which given culture to relate to more. Bhabha (1994) displaced hybridity to the field of culture, exploring hybridity in the context of the subaltern and natives who resist imperial domination, affirming that “The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (ibid, p. 2).

The notion of the third culture relates to Bhabha’s (1994) conception of the third space in which teachers arrive to conflicting ideas between their own identity as speakers of their home language, and the urge to adapt a different language in their teaching practice.

Bhabha (1994) states the following:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory- where I have led you- may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-sphere of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the ‘inter’- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people’. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (italics and quotes in original, p. 56)

Hybridity is highly important in looking at how identities are negotiated in sites of cross-cultural and multi-lingual interaction (Farrell, 2008). Hybridization is defined as “the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices” (Rowe & Schelling, 1991, p. 231). The product of this process are

hybrids, which Bhabha (1990) refers to as intercultural brokers in the spaces between nation and empire, producing narratives contrary from the nation's margins to the boundaries that encompass the nation.

The previous perspectives are adapted into one in which the participants of this research project encounter conflicting ideas about relating more to a given culture over the other due to the pressure of the need to become adapted to a new community within an encompassing society. With regards to this, a mixture of both cultures becomes prominent in creating a new culture in which characteristics of both cultures become present and are able to be projected. An important factor related to this mixture is the transnationalism phenomena engaged in by the participants, which will be inquired below.

2.6 Transnationalism

As Wyman (1993) highlighted, the migration phenomenon of families maintaining strong ties to their cultural homelands has been part of the shared history of Mexico and the United States. Considering the proximity of Mexico in relation to the United States, traveling back and forth between both countries may not be significantly distant. The constant migration from the homeland to another location within these two nations may result in what can be referred to as transnationalism.

Since this study aims to explore the socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context, I consider it pertinent to define transnationalism, as the process that each participant has been involved in; who a transnational is as well as why the term is being used, and the experiences as transnationals that the participants have lived and which may play a crucial role in their identity construction within a socio-cultural context.

Several notions of the concept of "transnationalism" have been presented. First, Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) approach transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement," including "multiple relations (familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political) that span borders" (p. 1). In this sense, transnationalism helps join two countries through the relations made by the migrants within both sides of the border.

Contrastively, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999) provide a more concrete concept of transnationalism as “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation” (p. 219). This denotes transnationalism as a process of interaction between those involved in migrating between both countries.

Binford (2000) refers to transnationalism as a term which is used to refer to the condensed social networks that go beyond national borders, created by the physical, emotional, and economic transition of individuals and families between two cultures. This process carries along physical transitions (such as a physical travel from one place to another), emotional transitions (such as the feeling of belonging to a particular culture), and economic transitions (such as facing particular difficulties) (ibid). This concept provides a more stable aggregate of people who transition from and between both countries.

Petron (2003) describes transnationalism as “the outlook, life strategies, and processes of identity formation among individuals, families, and communities whose members have spent substantial periods of time in different national and/or cultural spaces” (pp. 284-285). This may refer to a process in which those involved in migrating between both countries continuously construct and reconstruct their identity.

For Sánchez (2007b), transnationalism “embodies various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love; in addition, systems of power can be created, reinforced (or disrupted) in this process” (p. 493). This conception also views the transnationalism phenomena as a flow of several aspects between both countries.

Transnationalism for Vertovec (2009) “refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states”. (p. i) This conception relates to earlier ones in which transnationalism is viewed as a link between those countries in which people engage in constant emigration and immigration practices.

Duany (2011) presents transnationalism as “the construction of dense social fields through the circulation of people, ideas, practices, money, goods, and information across nations. This circulation includes, but is not limited to, the physical movement of human bodies as well as other types of exchanges, which may or not be recurrent, such as travel, communication, and remittances. Such exchanges may involve direct state intervention (as

in government attempts to promote and profit from remittances) or they may take place in the absence of the state (as in smuggling undocumented migrants)” (pp. 20-21). In this sense, not only does transnationalism imply physical migration of people, but also other elements that people carry along with them.

Transnationalism then, relates to the process of migration, interaction and network construction of individuals, relating their families and their identity formation, between two cultures, with a considerable time spent in each. Such migration results in the creation of transnational communities, and transnationals, who are the members of such communities.

2.6.1 Transnational Community

Guerra (1998) describes a transnational community as that in which its membership requires familiarity with and being of more than one geographic location. Hence, a fundamental characteristic of a transnational community is that its members are familiar with both of the places they have lived in (ibid). Furthermore, a transnational community can be described as:

...dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both. (Portes, 1997, p. 812)

Portes (1997) went on to extend the list of key elements of such communal group, noting that in a transnational community the members: are often bilingual, move between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political, and cultural interests which may require their presence in both locations. Such elements, then, can be used to consider who can be referred to as a transnational.

2.6.2 Transnationals

Transnationals are members of a transnational community (Portes, 1997). These people are afforded with peculiar characteristics who distinguish them as such. To arrive to a single, comprehensible definition of a transnational is rather complex as other conceptions may

relate to it. Nevertheless, I aim to focus only on the concept of a transnational. I wish to highlight two notions of a transnational:

- Petron (2003) refers to transnationals as “those individuals who have considerable life experiences on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. This definition includes objective factors such as years spent on both sides of the border and subjective factors such as both sides ‘feel like home’” (p. 6). Furthermore, it is stated that transnationals “acquire cultural knowledge and cultural tools from different nation states and cultural spaces, which they weave together to form distinct identities, understandings, and ways of being” (Petron, 2003, p. 285).
- Sánchez (2009) refers to a transnational as one who engages in a lifestyle with personal and family attachments to two nations or states. Moreover, transnationals are immigrants themselves, who may have one or more immigrant parents, and who are attached to both their sending country as well as their host country (ibid).

For the purposes of this research project, the term transnational is borrowed from Petron (2003) because “trans” implies a sense of unity and movement between two nations. The term transnational will be used as a migrant who is attached with and is familiar with the lifestyle of both Mexico and the U.S., and gains knowledge of both cultures to establish his or her understandings and ways of developing him or herself throughout the world (Petron, 2003; Sánchez, 2009).

Living upon borderlands, or “those unintentional, multicultural spaces where cultures meet” (Ernst-Slavit, 2000, p. 251), it is believed that those submerged in such a place “discover similar shared beliefs and rituals and are able to construct new ones” (ibid, p. 251). These experiences lived as transnationals can be referred to as “borderlands epistemologies” (Petron, 2003, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014). With reference to such, the borderlands in which the participants were submerged in can be seen as the locations in which they maintained communication with other transnationals. Petron (2003) argues that borderlands “represent the juxtaposition, interaction and melding of cultures, social classes, sexes and races” (p. 42). The epistemologies derived from such borderlands are the set of lived

experiences that the transnational may refer to in relation to the interaction with and between more than one culture (Petron, 2003; Petron & Greybeck, 2014).

The knowledge that the transnationals share and make reference to is based on their experiences migrating between Mexico and the United States and being able to be in contact with others who have similar migrating experiences. This may be referred to as “shifting multiple frames of reference” (Petron, 2003, p. 284), which can be described as a kind of borderlands consciousness in which the identities and understanding of the world may be conditioned by the transnational experiences lived by the participants. Furthermore, Sánchez (2007a) stated that transnationals, “are afforded an entirely different host of socio-cultural resources from which to draw, including but not limited to the ways they speak, construct identity and develop their worldviews” (p. 279). In other words, these transnationals are afforded with certain embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the sense that these transnationals are aware of what they know, are aware of being seen as different, and are aware of their projection towards others. The lived experiences of the participants and whom they relate to may allow them to shift from one point of reference to the other taking into account who they can identify with.

As Petron (2003) argues, the conceptions of the self and the world are not static; they change as the participants move between physical locations and cultural spaces, and no frame of reference is ever abandoned entirely. Thus, how the participant views him or herself may be in constant change as he or she moves from one place to another, engages in communication and interaction with different people, yet not leaving aside the experiences lived on both sides of the border.

2.6.3 The Transnational English Teacher

Having discussed transnationals, I now wish to direct attention to those transnationals who choose to develop as English teachers. Transnationals may take the decision to develop as English teachers due to their linguistic abilities in both the English and the Spanish language. It is vital to consider certain features which characterize a transnational English teacher.

Initially, a transnational English teacher is one who has engaged in transnational experiences him or herself (Petron, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014). Engaging in

transnational experiences may result in obtaining a particular linguistic competence in both the English and the Spanish language. Mora Pablo, Lengeling, and Basurto Santos (2015) note that these transnationals return with a language skill that being demanded by the Mexican educational system; these transnationals are perceived as having an advantage over other teachers, particularly in their English linguistic ability, classified and treated differently from their Mexican peers (ibid). This proficient level of English results as the importance given to the language that these people give to such, and may help contribute to maintaining a positive outlook about such English proficiency due to the continuous reiteration from other educators (Petron & Greybeck, 2014). The constant practice of their English, then, may help to maintain the reached level of proficiency in the language and continuously be recurred by others regarding the level of English proficiency possessed by these transnationals.

Transnational English teachers may “seek to pass on their English and transcultural knowledge to the next generation for reasons of their own identity” (Petron, 2003, p. 234). This may result in the transfer of the cultural capital from the teachers on to their students, similar to what Brittain (2002) refers to about how transnational English teachers, both linguistically and culturally, play an important role in the Americanization of their students; that is, they help their students become more familiar with the American culture and way of talking portrayed by their transnational English teachers. Referring to particular linguistic terms the transnational English teacher is familiar with due to lived experiences may result in more familiarity of American cultural elements from the students.

Similarly, Petron (2009) states that “the transnational ties and practices they maintain with the U.S. are constant and ongoing” (p. 116). In this sense, the transnational English teachers may make reference to attachments they have with their memories of past lived experiences. Monzó and Rueda (2003) state that transnational English teachers, being familiar with more than one culture, “bring... worldviews... shaped by the sociocultural and historical contexts of their lives” (p. 72), and enable them to address the linguistic, ideological, and social concerns of students from diverse communities (ibid). This is similar to what Petron (2009) argues about how transnational English teachers most often rely on their transnational cultural capital, which can be referred to as the linguistic and cultural knowledge acquired as a result of transnational experiences, resulting mainly in retelling stories of lived experiences in the U.S. (Petron & Greybeck, 2014). One can arrive to an

understanding that transnational English teachers carry along with them their past lived experiences as transnationals, and are able to portray these through their teaching practice. As Weisman (2001) explains, this is highly important for the students as these teachers are viewed as role models “who can offer their students the opportunity to imagine possibilities for their future that do not negate their cultural worldview” (p. 222).

One other characteristic of transnational English teachers is that they often cluster together and stand apart from other, non-transnational English teachers (Petron, 2003). Having the opportunity to engage in transnational practices may help gain broader cultural knowledge, as opposed to those who do not have the opportunity to engage in such practices. Making reference to and relating to this particular type of knowledge derived from lived experiences is what may bring together these transnational English teachers.

Transnational English teachers may be signaled with regards to several particularities that differentiate them from others, such as engaging in transnational experiences, their English language dominance and proficiency, their host of sociocultural knowledge and practices and the implementation of such into their teaching practice, and clustering apart from others with differing characteristics. Not all transnational English teachers may be aware of or possess all of the previously-mentioned characteristics, and those who are aware of or possess some may result in being more perceptible than others. Nonetheless, relying on their past lived experiences, transnationals may easily relate to other transnationals to form what can be referred to as small cultures and communities of practice.

2.7 Small Cultures and Communities of Practice

Once having returned to Mexico, and while in the process of obtaining academic formation in the TESOL and applied linguistics field, the participants of this study searched for other people who they could relate to. A strong bond was made between those who shared similar lived experiences as transnationals. This process of gathering with and relating to others with similar backgrounds migrating between both Mexico and the United States resulted in the formation of small cultures and communities of practice. As this study aims to explore the socio-cultural identity formation of transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context, it is vital to refer to the small cultures and communities of practice that these

transnationals engage in and become part of, which may play an important role in how they construct their identity.

2.7.1 Small Cultures

The small culture will first be considered. Beales, Spindler, and Spindler (1967) first referred to small cultures as any social grouping, from a neighborhood to a work group. They extended the definition by adding that a small culture is “the sum total of all the processes, happenings, or activities in which a given set or several sets of people habitually engage” (ibid, p. 9). What the group of people constantly engages in refers to sharing their lived transnational experiences.

Holliday (1999) presents a further definition of a small culture as “thus a dynamic, ongoing group process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances” (p. 248). He further extends the definition by providing that small cultures are “cultural environments which are located in proximity to the people concerned” (Holliday, 2014, p. 2). Similarly, the small culture being made reference to is the group formed by the transnationals at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato, where their academic preparation in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics is taking place.

The small culture paradigm ascribes culture to small social groupings or activities in which cohesive behavior is present (Holliday, 1999, 2014). In addition, Holliday (1999) affirms that “the idea of small cultures is non-essentialist in that it does not relate to the essences of ethnic, national or international entities; instead, it relates to any cohesive social grouping” (p. 240). The small culture focuses essentially on the formation of relatively small groups. Culture-making for Baumann (1996) is not an outdated improvisation, rather it is “a project of social continuity placed within, and contending with, moments of social change” (p. 31). In this sense, small groups of people gather together to give continuity to the gathering that is formed.

Culture, within the small culture paradigm, refers to “the composite of cohesive behavior within any social grouping” (Holliday, 1999, p. 247). Moreover, “seeing small culture as rooted in activities enables us to apply ‘culture’ not only to the processes that give cohesion to group behavior, but also to the process that give cohesion to any behavior, as

long as it involves groups” (ibid, p. 250). Thus, the cohesive behavior that brings the transnationals together is transnationalism; that is, they are able to recall their experiences migrating between both nations. Referring to this is the cohesive device that holds the social grouping together.

2.7.2 Communities of Practice

Having made reference to small cultures, the community of practice will now be taken into consideration. The concept of communities of practice arose from the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) who viewed learning as a social product developed through observation and modeling. From such, several conceptions of a community of practice have been presented.

Lave and Wenger (1991) first defined a community of practice as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). They added that this social gathering involves a group of people who are socially interdependent, and who share mutually-demarcated practices, beliefs, and understanding over an extended time frame in the pursuit of a shared enterprise (ibid). Similarly, McConnell-Ginet (1992) defined a community of practice as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor... defined by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages” (p. 464). A community of practice can then be understood to be a group of people who share a relationship based on their beliefs, practices, and views over a given topic.

Wenger (1998) took a similar stance and noted that “communities of practice develop around things that matter to people. As a result, their practices reflect the members' own understanding of what is important” (p. 2). Additionally, he argued that a community or practice defines itself along three dimensions: mutual engagement (common actions and/or ideas under which people engage), joint enterprise (the mutual objectives attempted to be reached within the social gathering), and shared repertoire (shared routines, words, ways of doing, stories, experiences and concepts brought into or produced within the social gathering) (ibid). The three dimensions that Wenger (1998) made reference to can be seen as the similarities in experiences and the aims of being able to share similar past lived experiences amongst the transnationals who cluster together. The three dimensions become present when

one of the participants of this research project is able to share something and find a relationship with someone else who also shares something similar. This leads to promoting the ongoing of the group and bring in others whom also wish to reflect on and share their experiences as migrants between both countries. Furthermore, Wenger (1998) added that:

On the one hand, a community of practice is a living context that can give newcomers access to competence and also can invite a personal experience of engagement by which to incorporate that competence into an identity of participation. On the other hand, a well-functioning community of practice is a good context to explore radically new insights without becoming fools or stuck in some dead end. A history of mutual engagement around a joint enterprise is an ideal context for this kind of leading-edge learning, which requires a strong bond of communal competence along with a deep respect for the particularity of experience. When these conditions are in place, communities of practice are a privileged locus for the creation of knowledge. (p. 214)

A community of practice is also understood as a social gathering to which people can identify with. This requires a type of competence in the sense that familiarity with an endeavor is required.

Wenger and Snyder (2000) adopt a similar stance to describe a community of practice as a group of people who is formally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise. This may result in knowledge as a community of practice allows people to build up and act in terms of a shared context; that is, a set of common meanings and stories that allow them to grasp a better understanding of the social world that matters to them and take more effective action to change it (ibid). Correspondingly, Wesley and Buysse (2001) note that this social gathering is an informally bound group of people who share a common interest and come together to reflect on and improve their practice collectively. In relation to such, it could be possible for the group of transnationals to come together to possibly reflect on their lived experiences and the practices they engaged in when adapting to a particular place and the need to adapt to another.

A community of practice can be viewed as an aggregate of people who come together based on similar practices, beliefs, and a similar perspective towards something in particular. The community of practice in which the participants of this research project are a part of can be related to a group of transnationals who come together in regards to their transnational experiences having the opportunity to develop as transnationals. Being a transnational is what

may define the membership of the community in which their experiences are brought together in mutual sharing.

2.8 Conclusion

The overview provided in this chapter aims to aid in understanding the issues related to transnational English teachers in Mexico. The topics are: the Mexico-U.S. socio-political relationship, socio-cultural theory, defining identity and several types of identity, culture (along with hybrid and third culture), transnationalism (along with transnational communities, transnationals, and the transnational English teacher), and small cultures and communities of practice. Similarly, relevant literature was also used to support the interpretations given by the researcher. As made reference to previously, this study aims to discern the socio-cultural identity construction of transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context at this university. Thus, the various concepts presented throughout this chapter are all related to the aspects involved in how transnational English teachers within the state of Guanajuato construct their identity from a socio-cultural perspective. In the following chapter, the methodology and the data collection process and techniques will be focused on.

Chapter Three Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to depict the methodology and the technique used in the process of collecting data. Initially, a background pertinent to the site of the research study in regards to the migration and its role in the transnational phenomena will be provided. Secondly, an explanation of the role and the effectiveness of both the method and the technique used in the process of collecting and exploring the data will be given. I will also refer to how such data collection was approached with the participants who took part of the research project. In addition, I will make reference to why a qualitative approach was considered for the development of this research project.

3.2 Background

I will first make reference to the migratory movement of the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, with the purpose of providing a wider perspective on the transnationalism phenomena encompassing this research project.

The history of both Mexico and the United States shares a difficult socio-political relationship (Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2015). Due to the proximity of both countries, constant migration becomes present.

The State of Guanajuato, Mexico, has a history of more than one hundred years related to international migration; the first Guanajuato natives migrated to the United States to become part of the railroad construction in the city of Chicago, followed by the “Braceros” program from 1942 to 1964, where 4.5 million Mexicans worked in the neighboring Northern country (Lamy, 2015). After such program, migration from Guanajuato to the United States maintained a constantly increasing rhythm, resulting in three and maybe even four generations of Guanajuato natives in the United States (ibid). Moreover, Lamy and Rodríguez Ortiz (2011) argue that the migration that takes place from Guanajuato, Mexico to the United States involves economic, political, social, cultural, and demographic aspects from the place of origin and the intended place of arrival of the migrant.

According to National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, INEGI*, 2010), Guanajuato is known as

the main expeller state with 116,235 migrants to the United States. Difficulties in economic and/or migratory status for Mexican immigrants in the United States results in return migration to their country of origin. According to INEGI (2010), 350,719 people returned to Mexico in 2010, out of which about approximately 32,314 people returned to the state of Guanajuato. Out of all the return migration, 48.8% is between 20-34 years old; that is, many who return to Mexico are in a relatively productive age.

The closeness of both Mexico and the United States has led to constant migration amongst both countries. This in turn has led to illegal immigration from Mexico citizens towards the U.S. territory, conflicting the socio-political relationship between both nations. Thus, “the complex socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States has created the constant migration of Mexicans looking for the ‘American dream’ for many years” (Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2015, p. 9). For some of these migrants, their experience may be a successful one; while for others, that may not be the case. Relying on their English language dominance as a main resource, some of these returning migrants may opt to become English teachers. Several research projects have been carried out regarding the process of transnationals becoming English teachers (Menard-Warwick, 2008; Mora Pablo, Lengeling, & Basurto Santos, 2015; Mora Pablo, Lengeling, Rivas Rivas, Basurto Santos, & Villareal Ballestros, 2015; Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2015; Mora Pablo, Frausto Hernández, & Rangel Gamiño, 2016; Petron, 2003; Petron, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014; Rivas Rivas, 2013). The previously mentioned relates to the core of this research project. Considering the high number of immigrants, and also the return migration that the State of Guanajuato has in relation to the northern neighboring country, these aspects provide transnational experiences for those who become part of this migratory movement between both countries.

3.3 Research Question and Objective

The research question that I intend to answer regards the role that society and culture play for transnational English teachers in the process of their identity construction and/or reconstruction developing as English teachers throughout the state of Guanajuato, in central Mexico. The question aimed to be answered is the following:

How do transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context construct their identity based upon a socio-cultural perspective?

With the purpose of exploring possible answers to the research question guiding my research project, the decision was made to lean towards a qualitative perspective to approach such. In addition, phenomenology seemed to be the most suitable method, along with the use of semi-structured interviews as a tool to gather information.

3.4 A Socio-cultural Perspective

Firstly, I consider pertinent to define my approach of why a socio-cultural perspective was taken to approach identity construction. I believe that society and culture are important aspects of any social group. Moreover, one may find an affiliation to a social group based on certain aspects taking the form of cultural practices.

The approach I take towards the understanding of a socio-cultural perspective of an identity construction process of transnational English teachers is adapted from the field of education and learning, in general. However, I believe it is relevant for the field of identity construction as well. The considered approach implies human behavior and learning as a dynamic social activity, situated in a certain physical and social context, and that is distributed across people, tools, and activities (Johnson, 2009). In this sense, arriving to a construction of a given identity encompasses the involvement of a social group within practices related to a given culture.

As the participants of this research project all share experiences migrating between both the United States and Mexico, interactions with the surrounding society became crucial as a way for the participants to engage with each other and better adapt to the location in which they were in. This was done so by making use of the linguistic resources they had available in order to facilitate their adaptation process.

3.5 Qualitative Research Paradigm

Regarding this research project, I opted for the use of a qualitative paradigm considering the foundation of my research question. With the intent of answering the research question, I consider necessary to explore the experiences of the participants within their educational, social, and professional settings.

As Cresswell (2007) explains, “In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences...” (p. 20). Moreover, Merriam (2009) notes that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). In this sense, I am interested in understanding how the participants of my research project construct a sense of their identity through their lived experiences.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as a set of interpretative practices with no theory or paradigm. Additionally, Maykut and Morehouse (1994), sustain that “qualitative research examines people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants” (p. 2). In other words, qualitative research may seek to examine and interpret what is said or done by people in a given situation.

Qualitative research may also be linked to interpretative analysis (Merriam, 2009; Powell, 2001; Tong, 2002). This interpretative paradigm supports the idea that humans are different, experiencing natural events in different manners; therefore, their reality can be seen as being socially constructed (Mora Pablo, 2012). Moreover, Holliday (2002) states:

The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretative. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. (p. 5)

In this sense, what can be done in qualitative inquiry is to touch on the words and experiences of the participants through an interpretation of the reality.

The reason why I decided to approach this research with a qualitative paradigm is because of the need to understand and examine the words and lived experiences of the participants regarding their experiences as transnationals and now as English teachers within different settings. In addition, an interpretation of the data provided by the participants is essential in arriving to an understanding of their reality as transnational English teachers developing in an EFL context in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. The lived experiences of the participants also help to better understand how and why they go about in their English teaching through relying on particular characteristics obtained as a result of their migrating experiences.

In the next section, I will continue by describing the method under which the research project was guided and carried out by. Having mentioned why I chose to approach this research project with a qualitative paradigm, I will now describe the research method under which this research project was guided by.

3.6 Phenomenology

The method which guided this research is referred to as phenomenology. Phenomenology has its roots in the eighteenth century as a critique of positivism, assuming an objective reality independent of individual consciousness (Barbour, 2008). Moreover, phenomenology is closely associated with European philosophy in the early 1900s, most notably with the works of Husserl, who was interested in human consciousness as the way to understand social reality; that is, how one thinks about experiences, or how consciousness is experienced (Barbour, 2008). In brief, phenomenology originated from the view that consciousness is used to understand reality, where reality is based upon experience.

Phenomenology reduces a human subject's experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its essence with the purpose of having a qualitative researcher identify a phenomenon as an object of human experience and give voice to it (Cresswell, 2007). In other words, phenomenologists are interested in the lived experiences, requiring the focus to go directly to the things themselves, turning toward the phenomena, depicting the essence or basic structure of experience (Merriam, 2009). Consecutively, the aim of phenomenology is to penetrate to the essential meaning of human experience, focusing on the phenomenon with the purpose of generating understanding from within; in other words, bracketing into the *epoche*, or setting aside prejudices and presuppositions to penetrate into the essence of the phenomenon (Richards, 2003). When approaching phenomenology, the task of the researcher is to view lived experiences with an attempt to understand the essence of such. The researcher's aim is to penetrate into the essence of what is provided by the obtained data.

The *SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research* (2008b) defines phenomenological research as "the study of lived or experiential meaning and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings in the ways that they emerge and are shaped by consciousness, language, our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities, and by our preunderstandings and presuppositions" (p. 614). In a briefer sense, phenomenology, as described by Merriam (2009), is the "study

of people's conscious experience of their life-world; that is, their everyday life and social action" (p. 25). In sum, phenomenology is a theoretical perspective aimed at generating knowledge about how people experience things (Barbour, 2008). What may seem to be an ordinary experience may be viewed as a phenomenon in order to analyze its essence.

Patton (2002) argues that there is an essence to shared experience; moreover, "these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon" (p. 106). However, such a process may not be a simple task. Merriam (2002) argues that phenomenology focuses on the essence or structure of an experience by attempting to show how complex meanings are built out of units of experience. Setting aside ideologies, prejudices, and presuppositions, may be a difficult task to do when bracketing the phenomenon in order to penetrate into its essence.

Regarding Sloan and Bowe (2013), they make reference to a distinction between descriptive and hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology, referring to descriptive phenomenology as the correlation of the noema of experience (the 'what') and the noesis (the 'how it is experienced') in which the essences themselves are identified, and hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology as a focus on understanding the meaning of experience by carrying out an analysis of text searching for themes, engaging with the data interpretatively, and with less emphasis on the essences that are important to descriptive phenomenology. The main difference of both types of phenomenology is that hermeneutic phenomenology provides an opportunity to give voice to the experiences of each of the participants taking part of the research project (ibid).

Four existentials related to how humans experience their world are proposed by Van Manen (1997): 1) spatiality (lived space), 2) corporeality (lived body), 3) temporality (lived time), and 4) relationality (lived human relation). For the purpose of this study, van Manen's (1997) proposed existentials may be related to a more hermeneutic approach towards phenomenology. Certainly, it is important to look at the experiences lived as transnationals in relationship to the space, their personal struggles, the time, and the relationships built along the process of migrating between both Mexico and the United States and now developing as English language teachers.

Phenomenology can be closely linked to the purpose of my research project. I believe that there is a reality of a given identity of these transnationals based upon their experiences. The phenomenon relates to migration playing an important role in how these transnationals construct a sense of reality, which in turn leads them to construct a sense of their identity. By inquiring into what seems to be the participants' everyday lives and social actions, one can come to an understanding of how their identity is constructed upon social practices related to a given culture.

It is crucial to explore the phenomena related to the lived experiences of the participants as transnationals migrating between both countries, establishing in a given country, relating to the society, and now developing as English teachers. Also, it is important to explore how such process is lived by such transnationals with the purpose of understanding how these people mutually view themselves and construct an understanding of who they are.

3.7 Data Gathering Technique

With regards to the process of data collection, semi-structured interviews were implemented as a tool to obtain information from the participants. The following section will refer to what an interview is, followed by a focus on the semi-structured interview.

It is of importance to mention that the participants of the research project had the option to choose whether the interview would be held in either the English or the Spanish language. Prior to each of the interviews, each participant was notified of the freedom to code-switch and code-mix between both English and Spanish, and also being able to use any linguistic elements of their choice (such as slang terms or any new coined terms, etc.).

3.7.1 The Interview

I consider pertinent to initially define what an interview is. From a simple and more classical perspective, Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) defined the interview as “a face-to-face verbal exchange, in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons” (p. 449). Moreover, Kvale (1996) defines the interview as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest (that) sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production ... and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (p. 14). Furthermore,

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to the interview as “the art of asking questions and listening” (p. 643), which can provide the opportunity for a richer conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Gaskell, 2002), and which may also result in providing more meaningful data. From a general view, one can refer to an interview as an interchange and request of information through the elicitation of questions and answers.

Having defined what an interview is, I now consider pertinent to make reference to the qualitative interview. Interviews in qualitative research refer to the one-on-one encounters between interviewer and interviewee aimed at understanding subjects’ lives and their personal experiences expressed in their own words (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In addition, qualitative interviews arise from the nature of human beings as conversational creatures with the purpose of understanding language (Brinkmann, 2013). With regards to the need of interactants to arrive to a mutual understanding, Warren (2001) describes qualitative interviewing as aiming to “understand the meaning of respondents’ experiences and worlds” (p. 83); that is, an aim for the interviewer to be able to access objective knowledge about the interviewee in ways that affect the understanding of the knowledge that may be produced throughout the interview, and as an advocate to give voice to the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). In sum, qualitative interviews arise from the conversational nature of human beings and in the need for mutual understanding of experiences.

3.7.2 Semi-structured Interviews

I will now make reference to semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview collects detailed information in a style that is closely related to a conversation, and is often used when the researcher wishes to delve deeply into a topic with the attempt to understand the provided answers thoroughly (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). In addition, a semi-structured interviewer allows for the interviewer to be flexible in the questions he or she wishes to cover in the interview, with the purpose of understanding the topics under discussion and what is attempted to be conveyed by the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). One may arrive to an understanding of a semi-structured interview as a type of conversation which elicits information based on a guide, and allows for flexibility to ask further questions to elicit more information and attempt to understand that provided by the interviewee as best as possible.

Additionally, with reference to semi-structured interviews, Corbetta (2003) states the following:

The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation. (p. 270)

In other words, semi-structured interviews provide certain freedom for the interviewer in regards to the emerging themes; that is, semi-structured interviews are generally organized around a set of determined open-ended questions, with the possibility of other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). One may further understand that interviews may result in themes, under which semi-structured interviews may be helpful in further explaining a given theme as it arises, with the purpose of comprehending it as best as possible.

I considered semi-structured interviews as the most suitable technique for data collection for my research project. Since the intent of my research process is to explore the role that society and culture may play in how transnational English teachers construct their identity, my main reason for using semi-structured interviews was with the purpose of allowing the participants to recall their experiences, being open for emerging topics and allowing room for further information.

Previous to the interviews, I approached the possible participants, held a brief conversation with each of them regarding their migrating experiences between Mexico and the United States and their teaching experiences, and explained the purpose of collecting information for research purposes. I then exchanged contact information with the selected accepting participants with the purpose of maintaining communication to arrange the date and time for the semi-structured interview. As mentioned, the participants chose whether the interview would be carried out in English or Spanish, and were also notified of the freedom to code-switch or code-mix between both languages, and use any linguistic elements of their choice.

Several questions were used as a basis for each of the semi-structured interviews (Appendix B). Some central questions were:

- Which aspects of the United States and Mexico can you relate to the most?
- What type of knowledge do you think you obtained from migrating between both countries?
- How is this knowledge implemented into your teaching?
- How do you view yourself as a transnational English teacher in Mexico?
- How are you viewed as a transnational English teacher by your students and colleagues?

With the previous questions, the aim was to obtain as much valuable data as possible that would be helpful in attempting to answer the research question. In addition to the base questions, I determined to implement follow-up questions that allowed extending the data when considering that additional information could be supplied from the participant. Some examples of follow-up questions are the following:

- Could you elaborate more on...?
- How did such make you feel?
- What do you mean by...?

The semi-structured interviews all took place within the facilities of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato, primarily in unused classrooms at the moment of the interview. The decision for opting for this type of interview was regarding the belief that such could help me obtain more authentic information from the participants, and also allowing for the opportunity to seek further information by eliciting follow-up questions.

The decision of implementing semi-structured interviews as a qualitative data-gathering tool gave the feeling of being an effective way to obtain pertinent information from the participants. Though the information provided by the participants seemed to be very useful, an interpretation was needed. Holliday (2002) states that:

The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretative. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate, then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. (p. 5)

The purpose of eliciting questions through the manner of a semi-structured interview was to obtain and extend as much comprehensible data as possible. The manner of approaching the questions through such type of interview had the purpose of giving the

participants a sense of flexibility to express themselves in a more open and personal means, other than providing a limited amount of information in an interview of a more closed and structured manner.

The intent was to be able to interpret the meaning the participants embedded in the experiences they provided. Hence, any possible reality that could be reached would be a construct of the interpretation given by the participants and myself, what Kvale (1996) refers to as a “social construction of perspectival reality” (p. 42).

The idea of implementing only one data collection technique may seem to limit the possibilities of triangulating the data with alternative techniques. Nonetheless, the implementation of only semi-structured interviews was with the purpose of obtaining as much information as possible from each participant. While the technique allowed for some participants to deviate from the set of base questions, these helped refer back and make connections to topics which were all covered by the participants.

Semi-structured interviews resulted to be a highly helpful tool in obtaining and extending rich and valuable information provided by the participants. Having a set of base questions allowed in relating the information provided by one participant to that provided from others. What was also in extending the initial information was having the flexibility to implement follow-up questions.

3.8 Data Organization and Coding

Throughout the process of data collection, semi-structured interviews with five base questions and follow-up questions were applied to the nine participants of the research project. The five base questions were used with the purpose of aiding in staying within the same topics of discussion for each of the participants. The follow-up questions allowed for the expansion of any further or more in depth and detailed information from the participants.

Also, throughout such process of data collection, all of the information provided by the participants in each of the semi-structured interviews was transcribed onto a computer. When transcribing the data onto a computer, I took into account what Richards (2003) refers to as aspects of delivery and turn-taking; that is, I used commas and periods as I perceived pauses within the responses provided by the participants in each turn-take they held. The large

amounts of information suggested codifying the answers provided by the participants in order to better refer to them when needed.

The word coding is of Greek origin, and means “to discover” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 6). Moreover, coding can be described as “nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. The designations can be single words, letters, numbers, phrases, colors, or combinations of these” (Merriam, 2009, p. 173). In sum, coding can be described as an interpretative act that represents the transition of the process of data collection and data analysis (Saldaña, 2009). Throughout the coding process, the researcher takes steps to “identify, arrange, and systematize the ideas, concepts, and categories uncovered in the data” (Given, 2008a, p. 85). Additionally, Saldaña (2009) sustains that the act of coding requires perceiving and interpreting what is happening in the data upon looking at such through the filter of an analytic lens. In other words, a researcher has the task of not only collecting the required data, but also analyzing it from a given perspective.

Within the field of qualitative inquiry, a code is most often described as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). During the process of data collection and analysis, the raw data I obtained from the semi-structured interviews was coded and organized into possible categories. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) describe an initial code for the type of data which includes the source of the data, where the data can be found in the transcript, and whom the data was provided by. The initial code given to the units of data related to the source of where the data came from (SSI was used to represent the semi-structured interviews used as a data gathering technique with each of the participants), followed by a number which represents the order in which the semi-structured interviews were carried out, followed by the name used to represent the pseudonym given to each of the participants, and followed by a number after a hyphen used to indicate the unit of data provided by a participant during a certain turn-take. As an example, the initial code (SSI5Abel-20) denotes what the fifth participant referred to as Abel provided during his twentieth turn-take during a semi-structured interview. The following table presents this information in a more systematized manner.

| Code Item | Meaning |
|-----------|--|
| SSI | Semi-structured interview |
| 5 | Number of participant |
| A (Abel) | Pseudonym given to the participant |
| -20 | What was said by the participant in his 20 th turn-take |
| SSI5A-20 | What was said by Abel during his 20 th turn-take in a semi-structured interview |

Table 1. Information coding example.

Once having an initial code of the raw data, the next step is to unitize and categorize the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the afore-mentioned as identifying single units of data in order to relate them to each other in possible categories, or as Merriam (2002) notes, “one begins with a unit of data and compares it to another unit of data, and so on, all while looking for common patters across the data” (p. 14). This process relates to what can be referred to as thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting particular patterns (referred to as themes) within the data, searching across the obtained data in search of repeated patterns to join together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process of a thematic analysis was carried out through an inductive way; that is, developing certain themes directed by the content of the data (n.d., 2016). When attempting to find themes within the obtained raw units of data, the overall content was used as a reference to connect what was provided by one participant with what other participants mentioned. Being able to identify certain similarities in what the participants provided within the the data, several themes emerged. An analysis of the data obtained from the participants arranged in themes will be made reference to in the following chapter.

3.9 Positioning

The positioning regarding my role in the research project was important to consider. Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Lee, Ntseane & Muhamed (2001) describe positioning as the stance that the researcher takes when dealing with the participants; that is, whether the researcher is considered part of the people being researched as an insider, or whether the person decides to detach him or herself from the participants and be considered an outsider. Positioning may also be referred to as reflexivity, involving a self-scrutiny on part by the researcher in being aware of the relationship he or she has with the others (Chiseri-Stater, 1996). In this sense, I consider it pertinent to present myself and where I may be found within the research project.

3.9.1 My Positioning

In this section, I will provide pertinent autobiographical information with the purpose of presenting where I stand within this research project. I believe that by doing so, the interpretations of the provided data will become clearer.

I was born in the city of Leon, Guanajuato, and raised in a small neighboring town called Romita. At a relatively early age, I had the opportunity to migrate with my family to the United States. As time went by, I continuously migrated back and forth between Oregon in the United States and Guanajuato here in Mexico. I consider myself as a transnational considering my experiences migrating between both countries. Throughout my life as a transnational, I had the opportunity to live various experiences. I received the support of others to be accepted and to adapt myself to a new place, but I also experienced certain difficulties based mainly on my appearance and the word choice I relied on at a given moment. Sporadically, fully identifying myself with a particular group of people was difficult to achieve.

Having settled in the state of Oregon, knowing that a majority of my family was residing in the neighboring state of California, I became aware and attached to an urban lifestyle. This also aided in fostering the use of Spanglish between my family members. Migrating back and forth between the United States and Mexico also helped me create a sense of belonging to both cultures. While I was migrating to either country, I ended up going back to any of the two homes I had on either side of the border. This helped me maintain direct and personal contact with more or less the same people. I felt as not being viewed as a Mexican-American or a Chicano; I felt viewed as a Mexican with an American influence.

Since joining the BA in TESOL program and now being part of the MA in ALELT program at the same school campus, I increasingly gained awareness that I was one amongst others who have also lived similar experiences regarding their migrating experiences between both Mexico and the United States.

Within my research, I attempted to be as objective as possible with regards to obtaining my data from the participants. Merriam (1998) argues that “all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being’s worldview, values and perspective” (p. 22). Although I attempted to be as distant as possible from the research, I believe that what helped me interpret and better understand the experiences provided by the participants of my research

project was the fact that I have a similar history in terms of migrating between and becoming attached to both the United States and Mexico. I consider myself to be an outsider for this research project since I am not taking direct participation; yet, it is important to note that my experiences as a transnational help me interpret the data provided by the participants from a perspective on similarly lived experiences.

In this sense, my lived transnational experiences help me grasp an understanding of the data provided by the participants from a similar perspective. Having the opportunity to migrate to and live within the United States, and constantly migrating back to Mexico helped me become aware of the transnational practices as I lived them personally. This also helped me relate to others with similar characteristics.

3.10 The Research Site

In regards to the research site, this research project was carried out in the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato. The history of the University of Guanajuato dates back more than 280 years, specifically in 1732, considered a prestigious state institution within Mexico, and consistently ranked high by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education (Lengeling, Crawford & Mora Pablo, 2016). This is the largest public university in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, and is one of the largest public universities in central Mexico. This university offers a wide variety of areas of study according to the demands of the community and its surroundings. The different areas of study are divided under different divisions. Some of the divisions are: health sciences, social and administrative sciences, social sciences and humanities, natural and exact sciences, architecture, art and design, economic-administrative sciences, law, politics and government, engineering, life sciences, and health sciences.

At this university, within the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities in the Guanajuato Campus, the Language Department can be found. During the 1970s, the Language Department opened its doors, becoming officially organized in September of 1979, and changing its name from Language Center to Language School in 2000, and to Language Department in 2009 (Lengeling et al., 2016). This department now has a self-access center, offers various language courses, several language certification programs such as the Certificate of Overseas Teachers of English (COTE), the Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (DOTE), the In-Service Course for English Language Teachers (ICELT), a

Certificate for Teaching English focused mainly on autonomous learning, a BA program in Teaching Spanish as a Second Language, a BA TESOL program, and recently an MA program in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching was opened in 2015.

With current demands in the state of Guanajuato and the Bajío area in Mexico, this department focuses on preparing qualified professionals to learn, teach, and research areas related to the English language.

3.11 The Participants

The participants selected for this research project are all enrolled students of the BA TESOL and the MA in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching programs at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato. The main characteristic for the selection of the participants is that they can all be referred to as “transnationals”. In other words, the main and only requirement for the participants to take part in this research project is for them to have lived a significant amount of time in the United States, and hence, be familiar with the migration process between both the United States and Mexico.

The participants are all enrolled regular students of the various offering semesters of the afore-mentioned programs. The purpose of having participants from different semesters in this research project relates to the different experiences in relating to others in either of the academic programs and the differences in the time adapting back to Mexico. I believe that this variety could possibly lead to providing richer data regarding their experiences, their adaptation processes, their teaching experiences, and how they relate to others with similar past lived experiences.

The vast majority of the students referred to as “transnationals” were invited to take part of the research project (over twenty potential participants). Becoming aware of such characteristic relied upon previous interaction with these people, and them being signaled out by others. A total of nine participants, five males and four females, agreed to take part of the research project. The ages of the participants ranges from nineteen to forty years at the time the semi-structured interviews were applied to each of the participants.

In the following section, I will provide brief bio-data about each of the participants of the research project in the order in which their interviews were carried out.

Oscar is the first participant. He is a male, and he was twenty-six years old when the interview was carried out. He was born in Mexico and migrated with his family to the United States at the age of three. He constantly migrated to Mexico for summer vacation and the Christmas holidays to spend time with his family. He migrated permanently back to Mexico six years ago to pursue his academic formation in university.

Samuel is the second participant. He is a male, and he was thirty-two years old when the interview was carried out. He was born in Mexico and migrated with his family to the United States months after he was born. He sparingly migrated to Mexico to spend vacations with his family. He migrated permanently back to Mexico ten years ago. He began teaching English shortly after his arrival and began to pursue his academic formation in university to develop as an English teacher.

The next participant is Graciela. She is a female, and was nineteen years old when the interview was carried out. She was born in the United States and maintained contact with both of her parents' families on both sides of the border. She constantly migrated to Mexico to spend time with her family during vocational breaks. She migrated permanently back to Mexico one year ago with the purpose of pursuing her academic university formation at a lower cost than in the United States.

Andrew is the fourth participant. He is a male and was thirty-four years old when the interview was carried out. He was born in Mexico and migrated to the United States during his youth. He migrated back to Mexico fifteen years ago. He pursued his academic formation in the natural sciences field. Nevertheless, he began to develop as an English teacher due to his proficiency in the language.

The following participant is Abel. He is a male, and was forty years old when the interview was carried out. He was born in Mexico and migrated to the United States during his youth. He migrated permanently back to Mexico ten years ago. He pursued his academic formation in the computer sciences field. However, he began to develop as an English teacher due to his proficiency in the language.

Yesenia is next. She is a female, and was twenty-four years old when the interview was carried out. She was born in the United States, and constantly migrated back and forth for a certain period of time between both countries. She migrated permanently back to Mexico

five years ago with the purpose of pursuing her academic formation at a lower cost than in the United States.

Jessie is the seventh participant. He is a male, and was twenty-nine years old when the interview was carried out. Jessie was born in the United States, and constantly migrated back and forth between both countries. He migrated permanently back to Mexico two years ago to pursue a different lifestyle and pursue his academic formation in university.

The following participant is Lorena. She is a female, and was thirty-one years old when the interview was carried out. Lorena was born in Mexico, and had the opportunity to migrate to the United States seeking labor opportunities. She migrated permanently back to Mexico twelve years ago and began to develop as an English teacher due to her linguistic abilities.

Norma is whom I present lastly as the ninth participant. She is a female, and was twenty-seven years old when the interview was carried out. Norma was born in the United States and constantly migrated back and forth between both countries. She migrated permanently back to Mexico five years ago to pursue her academic formation at a lower cost in comparison with the costs of the United States.

The bio-data of the participants will be summarized in the following table:

| Participant number | Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Migration info |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|-----|---|
| 1 | Oscar | Male | 26 | Born in Mexico. Constantly migrating to Mexico for vacation periods. Migrated back to Mexico six years ago. |
| 2 | Samuel | Male | 32 | Born in Mexico. Sparingly migrating to Mexico for vacation periods. Migrated back to Mexico ten years ago. |
| 3 | Graciela | Female | 19 | Born in the United States. Constantly migrating to Mexico for vacation periods. Migrated back to Mexico one year ago. |
| 4 | Andrew | Male | 34 | Born in Mexico. Not being able to migrate constantly. Migrated back to Mexico fifteen years ago. |
| 5 | Abel | Male | 40 | Born in Mexico. Not being able to migrate constantly. Migrated back to Mexico ten years ago. |
| 6 | Yesenia | Female | 24 | Born in the United States. Constantly migrating between Mexico and the U.S. Migrated back to Mexico five years ago. |
| 7 | Jessie | Male | 29 | Born in the United States. Constantly migrating between Mexico and the U.S. Migrated back to Mexico two years ago. |
| 8 | Lorena | Female | 31 | Born in Mexico. Not migrating constantly. Migrated back to Mexico twelve years ago. |
| 9 | Norma | Female | 27 | Born in the United States. Constantly migrating between Mexico and the U.S. Migrated back to Mexico five years ago. |

Table 2. Participant information and bio-data.

It is important to mention that all of the participants mentioned maintaining ties with both places where they had the opportunity to migrate to. Due to legal issues, some participants were not able to migrate back to the United States; however, they felt a sense of belonging to both places where they lived at for a certain period of time. The following section will provide details about the ethical considerations of the research project.

3.12 Ethics

Ethical related issues may arise when conducting research. Bell (2010) suggests that ethical guidelines in research require taking into account aspects such as: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and reciprocity. The afore-mentioned aspects were all taken into

consideration regarding the processes of data collection, data analysis and any presentation of data throughout the research project.

Informed consent has the purpose of truly informing the participant about the details concerning their participation and the use of any extra devices (Banister, 2007). Each of the participants in this research project was informed about the purposes of such inquiry. Also, they were each given a letter of informed consent (Appendix A) for them to sign if they understood their role as participants, my role as a researcher, the use of an audio recording device, their questions were answered, and knew about and allowed me to manage any data they provided throughout the research project. In addition, these aspects were also made reference to prior to setting on the recorder for any interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity involve protecting the participant and not presenting him or her in identifiable form (Bell, 2010). Moreover, Richards and Schwartz (2002) recommend the use of pseudonyms or initials and, where possible, change other identifying details in the research. Each of the participants was asked whether they wished to remain anonymous; hence, assigning each a given pseudonym which would help in coding and managing the data.

Reciprocity can be referred to as an exchange of factors which may contribute to both the researcher and the participant in the sense of flowing from interest in the participants' experiences, attending to what they say, and honoring their words when presenting the obtained data (Seidman, 1998). The reciprocity given to the participants was in terms of continuously thanking their participation in such research, making any necessary arrangements of date, time and place for the interviews, and acknowledging the time lapse each participant had available. Also, an interpretation was given with the purpose of not misinterpreting any data provided by the participant to avoid any harm.

Certainly, ethical guidelines were followed with the purpose of protecting the integration of the participant, as well as fully informing them every detail of the research study and its possible uses at a given time in the future.

3.13 Conclusion

The afore-mentioned section describes the methodology of this research project. A background of the migration within the State of Guanajuato in relationship to the United

States and its return migration was initially presented. Successively, the research question and the objective of this research along with a brief description of a socio-cultural approach were presented. Continually, the approach and its description and the method guiding this research project, as well as the technique used to gather information were described.

As referred to previously, a qualitative approach aided in seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants and how they construct their identity developing as transnational English teachers here in Mexico. I viewed this as phenomena, which I attempted to inquire. The semi-structured manner in the interviews allowed me to dive deeper into the experiences of the participants in a more personal manner, linking units of information of one participant to another, and for the other participants as well. The data organization and coding of the obtained data was also made reference to. The positioning regarding my role in the research project was additionally made emphasis to. Furthermore, the research site, as well as the participants of my research project, was described. Prior to and during the process of data collection, informing the participants about the process and the purpose of doing the research was regarded as highly important along with other ethical issues outlined in this chapter.

As a summary of the prior section, the background, research question and objectives, methodology, the setting and participants, and ethical-related considerations were made reference to. In the following chapter, the data findings and its corresponding analysis will be presented.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the methodology according to which this research project was carried out was described. The approach, method, and data-gathering technique were discussed, as well as the participants selected for this inquiry along with the social space in which this research took place. In this chapter, the different emerging themes which arose from the process of the collection of data will be presented. Along with such, the findings regarding the information provided from the participants will be discussed according to a given interpretation.

4.2 The Findings

In the following section, fragments of data which were obtained from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed in accordance with a personal interpretation. When transcribing the recorded interviews, the data was broken down into segments corresponding to each reply given by the participant upon each question. Throughout the analysis, several participants provided similar information regarding similar experiences and ideologies for the presented questions. It may appear that several of the participants relied on commonalities regarding their past experiences as transnationals.

The analysis of the data provided by the participants will now be discussed. Based on the transcriptions of the responses provided by the participants, a personal interpretation is to be carried out regarding the possible outcomes of the data.

Some of the themes that emerged from the transcripts obtained from each semi-structured interview and that will be interpreted and analyzed are as follows:

- Identity (cultural, self, social, and professional)
- Constructing the transnational English teacher

In the following section, the discussion of the themes will be presented.

4.2.1 Constructing a Cultural Identity

Migrating between two different countries and having the opportunity to reside within these for a specific period of time, along with several factors and instances which help

become attached or detached from a particular ethnic group, allows one to feel a sense of belonging towards a certain group of people. The lived experiences of each of the participants helped them relate more towards the cultural aspects of a given nation. Some participants felt a sense of belonging and more related to the culture of the United States, while others felt that sense of belonging and related more to the culture of Mexico.

4.2.1.1 Constructing a Sense of an American Identity

Having the opportunity to migrate to and live in the United States for a certain period of time allowed some of the participants to become attached to certain aspects lived in such country. This, in turn, seemed to play a role in some of the participants leaning more towards the United States culture in regards to having a preference of this culture over the Mexican one. As Bauman (2004) suggested, the question of a given cultural identity arises every time a person is exposed to the “other” culture to which he or she may relate to, while certain claims of cultural affiliations remain an ever-changing process determined by the place of reflection. Several instances and preferences allowed for this sense of belonging.

When being questioned about which aspects of the United States he feels most identified with, Oscar provides the following

... probably the thing I feel the most attached to is music, cause I listen to rap, rock, and most of my music repertoire is in English, and really the only Spanish music I listen to is very little. So I think it's music, and maybe like pop culture, like movies and stuff. (SSIIOscar-1)

Oscar points out to his musical preference. In addition, Oscar also makes reference to his taste of the pop culture in relation to music. When being questioned the why of his preferences, Oscar responds with the following:

I think it's because it's what I grew up with. It's kinda hard to detach myself from it because I grew up with it. For example with the movies, a whole bunch of those Power Ranger movies, the new ones are coming out, and the Batman movies, they keep coming out and, they've been around since I was a child... I think it's still because of that. (SSIIOscar-2)

Oscar seems to be aware that he is attached to these elements. He makes reference to these elements being present during his childhood and to which he still feels a preference towards. A case similar to Oscar is Samuel, who also felt attached to the United States culture in regards to his personal preferences. He provides the following:

...I grew up with the hip hop culture, I grew up listening to hip hop and dressing hip hop, so every time that a new clothing line would come out with certain type

of clothes, or new shoes, I would be into that culture, so I grew up adapting hip hop into my lifestyle... (SSI2Samuel-3)

Samuel, similar to Oscar, makes reference to a particular musical preference. This musical preference suggests to have played an important role in him adapting particular aspects of that preference into his lifestyle, particularly in his clothing selection and overall look. When questioned about which aspects of the United States he felt most related to, Samuel provides the following:

I can identify myself more with sports and food because I grew up with a baseball background. My dad was a baseball player, and we lived close by a baseball stadium, so my dad would sometimes take us to the game, and I also lived amongst fast food restaurants... (SSI2Samuel-2)

Samuel denotes his preference towards a certain sport. He recalls how his father also played a role in Samuel having a feeling of enjoyment towards baseball. Also, living amongst fast food restaurants is mentioned by Samuel as a way for him to express his preference over these as well.

Yesenia also seems to have similar preferences as Samuel, when questioned which aspects of the United States she felt most related to, she provides the following of what she misses the most about the United States:

... most of it, I miss the parks, because I used to have a lot of fun at the parks: going to watch baseball games, basketball games, and especially cause I would go with all my family, and we had good times...they did movie shows at the park also and it was very fun. (SSI6Yesenia-2)

Yesenia also comments about her inclination towards sports and being able to attend those sport events. She also mentions visiting parks and having good times with her family at these places.

Similarly, Abel also highlights which elements of the United States he enjoys the most. He provides the following:

Ahhh... I like sports, I like shopping, I like different types of food, and I like the places. They seem to be more clean, better organized. I like the court system, the legal system, the traffic system, it seems to be well structured as well, and I enjoy those areas. (SSI5Abel-1)

Abel refers to several elements, such as: shopping, enjoying different gastronomy one can find in the United States, being able to visit certain places, and the overall structure of elements such as the legal and traffic system, which he liked most about the United States. He seems to have the appreciation for some of these elements because of their cleanness and overall structure.

These characteristics also seem to be important for Norma. Making reference to which elements she likes most about the United States, she provides the following:

Well, maybe their [the United States] rules, like... let's talk about the city, how it works; there has to be no trash, you have to respect a lot of things, and that makes it better... (SSI9Norma-3)

Norma, similar to Abel, also describes how the cleanness, along with respecting certain public places from the United States are attractive to her.

For some participants, constructing a sense of their American identity relied on their linguistic choice. Oscar provides the following regarding his preference of using English as opposed to Spanish:

I feel more confident using English than I do with Spanish because my Spanish vocabulary isn't as extensive as my English one is, and, for example like in academics, I feel more comfortable with English because my Spanish is very limited, like how me and my family, how we speak, and I don't really have that academic vocabulary in Spanish... (SSI1Oscar-5)

Oscar denotes a peculiarity of using English over Spanish because of the confidence he has due to the amount of vocabulary he possesses with reference to the academic field.

Opposite to Oscar's particularity for using English in the academic field, Samuel recalls using English as a means of communicating within the society in which he was part of. He provides the following:

Uh, street language meaning that you grew up in the States, you used street language as a vernacular type of language, that you used swear words with your friends, as opposed to using formal language inside a classroom or, referring to a police officer, or somebody that has an educational background, somebody with a status, status quo in life. (SSI2Samuel-7)

Samuel denotes using a more colloquial type of language to relate to a certain group of people. Also, he makes reference to using a more formal variety of English to relate to people to whom he considers educated or with a certain status amongst the society.

Also, for some participants, constructing a sense of their American identity required for them to relate more to cultural elements, in general. When questioned why he related more to cultural elements of the United States, Jessie considers relating to everything while living in that country, he provides the following:

Because I went up there when I was a little kid, and I got used to everything out there, pretty much everything. I mean, I went up there [to the United States] when I was fourteen, thinking I was going to come back [to Mexico] in one year. It took me fourteen to come back though... (SSI7Jessie-4)

Jessie considers this strong relationship due to the early migration he lived at a young age, and also due to the amount of time he spent in the United States.

Similar to Jessie, Oscar believes to have a vast amount of cultural knowledge. When questioned about which cultural knowledge he believes he holds, Oscar recalls an experience in which having such cultural knowledge was useful for him. He provides the following:

I think there's a lot of knowledge, for example like what to expect once you go to places. Recently, we went to the States with a classmate, and she asked me, okay so what do we do now? Or, what's next? And I kind of guided her through a little bit, like at the restaurants and stores, but yeah, I think it's just like what to expect, and like those social norms, more or less. Also like the cultural knowledge, I think I have an upper hand when it comes to that... (SS11Oscar-7)

Oscar seems to be aware of cultural knowledge in instances such as social norms, and social expectations of what is expected in different places, something which can be considered difficult to achieve by someone who has not had the opportunity to be in direct contact with the target culture.

In addition, for some participants, constructing a sense of their American identity was upon noticing a difference between Mexico and the United States. Yesenia recalls noticing people of different ethnic background while living in the United States, something that does not happen here in Mexico. She provides the following:

... noticing the difference between cultures because in the U.S. I got to see like many Chinese people, and here where I live, I don't see Chinese people, and in the U.S. I would see them. I would also see Irish people, and the behavior of the whole community was different. So to me, that made me see the cultural difference between Mexico and the U.S. (SS16Yesenia-7).

Yesenia recalls being able to view how the community in which she was a part of behaved having people of different ethnic backgrounds, something that is not common in the place where she currently resides in Mexico. Moreover, she seems able to notice different ethnic groups as a product of her experiences.

Similar to Yesenia, Jessie makes a contrast between Mexico and the United States. He makes allusion to traditions and certain characteristics of people from both sides of the border. Jessie provides the following:

It's different though, like in Mexico, you don't have a 4th of July. We don't have an open mind here in Mexico. They're [Mexicans] very closed, and they just go follow the traditions pretty much; the woman has to stay at home, and the guy goes to work. Back in the States, it's fifty fifty though... (SS17Jessie-2)

Jessie's comparison between Mexico and the United States takes into account a tradition, and also characteristics of the people from both countries. He also makes reference to duties of both men and women upon the idea of being more open-minded in the United States.

Some participants made reference to constructing their cultural identity leaning more towards the American culture; hence, constructing an American identity. Having a preference towards factors such as: music, food, sports, a certain language, and certain characteristics of public sectors, along with knowing about certain social norms and expectations, and comparing both Mexico and the United States helped some participants relate more towards the American culture. This, in turn, helped them construct a cultural identity leaned more towards the United States culture. The following section provides how some participants made reference to constructing their cultural identity inclining more towards the Mexican culture.

4.2.1.2 Constructing a Sense of a Mexican Identity

While for some participants, migrating to and living in the United States for a certain period of time helped them construct a sense of an American identity; for others, having the opportunity to maintain contact with and traveling back to Mexico helped them construct a sense of a Mexican identity. As Mani (2007) suggests, engagement with the other cultural does not necessarily lead to an abnegation of the inherited one; that is, the participants distancing themselves from their inheriting culture did not lead to repudiation of such. Several cases allowed for this to occur.

When questioned about what she likes most about Mexico, Lorena provides the following:

From Mexico, I like many things. I know Mexico has many problems as a country, but I like the fact that we still have that union in our families, and we have that good union also with our friends. We try to gather with them frequently, see each other, and share many things, something that I found difficult to do in the U.S., yes I did make quite a few friends, which are the ones who I miss, but in general, the people are very cold, not very united, and it's like everyone is doing their own thing. (SS18Lorena-3)

Lorena mentions that above the different issues and characteristics that she considers Mexico to have, she believes that there are positive aspects which she considers are also important such as the unity within families and social gatherings. She extends her preference towards Mexico making a more direct comparison between the people of both Mexico and the United and the desires that she believes both groups of people have. She provides the following:

...I think that, in general, they [people from the United States] know that there are things in our culture in Mexico. There are things that we [Mexicans] need to maybe change a little, in the sense that over there [in the United States], the competence is strong, and here in Mexico, competence does exist, but it's like we're more focused on, not so much competing amongst ourselves, but reaching those objectives that we have already set. So I think that the difference between the U.S. culture and the Mexican culture is that us inside our humanistic context, we try to reach objectives, but they are more focused on reaching that success in the economic sense, they are very materialistic in that sense, and they try to reach those objectives with basis on how much remuneration they will have. (SSI8Lorena-11)

Lorena believes that there is awareness of the issues that Mexico faces. Nevertheless, she holds a preference for Mexico, viewing such as being more humanistic, opposed to the United States focusing more on competence and the economic aspects and growth of the country.

Similar to Lorena, Norma feels more attached towards the Mexican culture. When questioned how she felt about the United States culture, she provides the following:

...I'm a little ashamed to say that, but I really, I'm not really attached to that culture [the American culture], I'm not, so if I could share something that I know, I will do it, but there is not a lot because like I said, I am so culturally related to Mexico... (SSI9Norma-29)

Norma makes reference to her past experiences in the United States as a way to obtain knowledge about cultural aspects for her to share. Being born in the U.S. and constantly visiting her family in the neighboring country, it seems that her past experiences might give her a preference for the American culture. Nevertheless, she feels more related to aspects of the culture in Mexico.

For other participants, the time having resided in a given place allows them to relate more to a specific culture. Abel denotes being more attached to Mexico because of the time lived in such place. He provides the following:

...at this point, well, I used to be related more to the American culture, but as I spend more time here in Mexico, I am related more to the Mexican culture, even though I still have aspects about the American culture that I like and that I miss, but I feel more identified as a Mexican. (SSI5Abel-14)

Abel points out missing certain aspects from the United States that he particularly enjoys. However, due to the increasing time of residence in Mexico, he feels more of a sense of belonging and identification with the Mexican culture. He seems to show a change in how identity may be flexible.

For other participants, having the opportunity to live amongst both cultures helped them open their view towards both cultures. Lorena retells how being in contact amongst another culture helped her value more her Mexican heritage. She provides the following:

I got the experience of meeting a new culture. I got the experience to appreciate more what I have in Mexico. I got the experience of, since the moment I was in the U.S. and I saw the lifestyle that they live, that opened up my mind. When I returned to Mexico, I saw things from a different perspective, but at the same time, it made me value more what I have here. (SS18Lorena-6)

Lorena highlights how seeing a different lifestyle while living in a different culture different from her home culture made her value more what she has in Mexico. This arose from seeing things from a different perspective as to that which she was accustomed to. Lorena seems to position herself in a flexible and non-static cultural identity.

While some participants made reference to constructing a cultural identity with an inclination towards the American culture, other participants found a stronger connection towards the Mexican culture. Having a more open mind, the time spent in Mexico, and personal attachments towards this country helped some participants relate more towards the Mexican culture. This helped them construct a cultural identity leaned more towards the Mexican culture. The following section presents an uncertainty about whether some participants leaned more towards either to the American or the Mexican culture, finding a place of “in-betweenness”.

4.2.1.3 The Hybrid/ Third Culture as a Cultural Identity

While some participants recalled migrating to and living amongst the American culture and becoming attached to certain aspects of such culture in order to become more culturally attached to the United States, and while some participants pointed out their sense of belonging amongst Mexico to become culturally attached to the latter country, other participants found difficulty while deciding which culture they can feel more attached to. Moreover, some participants recalled not being familiar with both the United States and Mexican culture; nevertheless, they felt sagacity of taking aspects from both cultures to create a sense of a third or a hybrid culture.

The idea of a third culture relates to Bhabha’s (1994) conceptualization of the third space characterized by teachers’ conflicting ideas between their own identity as speakers of their home language, and the pressure to adopt an English language in their teaching as

advocated by a given methodology. The notion of a hybrid culture relates to Kumaravadivelu's (2008) notion of such in which a new culture is formed without allowing either the inherited nor the learned culture to fully determine one's values and beliefs, relying upon a state of uncertainty as to which culture to relate to more upon migrating from one culture to another. I take the previous perspectives and adapt them to one in which an individual arrives to conflicting ideas due to the pressure of the need to adapt to a new given community. In this sense, a mixture of both cultures becomes present to create a new culture in which certain characteristics become prominent.

Andrew initially refers to an "in between" space in which he feels he is in. He provides the following:

Actually, when you were saying American or Mexican, I would think just in between, not so much American or Mexican... (SSI4Andrew-25)

Andrew feels that he does not have a preference over one culture over the other. He follows up on his comment and refers to having an ideology about the closeness of Mexican families; yet, he feels distant towards his own family. He adds:

At this moment, it's just that, when I think of Mexican culture, I think of, I just think about what I like about it, and that would be the family times, like I mentioned. In that sense, I'm not so close to my family anymore...but, no, I haven't considered myself either Mexican or American that much. (SSI4Andrew-14)

Andrew recalls his ideology about Mexican families not relating to his current situation, which allows him to be unsure about which culture (either Mexican or American) he can relate to more, considering himself not as Mexican or American.

Although some participants mentioned relating to certain aspects of the United States, they seem to be unsure about which culture they can actually relate to more. Making reference to relating more to a particular culture, Oscar states:

...it's kind of difficult because the transition happened a while back I guess; I don't know if I'm still going through it, but I guess there was a time like getting used to the system, the way things work here [Mexico]... (SSI1Oscar-32)

Oscar refers to a transition as a change in adapting back to the Mexico. He seems to be unsure of whether or not he is still adapting to Mexico. This continuous process of adaptation seems to be the cause of him feeling unsure about which culture he can relate to most.

Similar to Oscar, Samuel felt connected to certain aspects of the United States; yet, when being questioned about which culture he can relate to more, he answers the following:

...I want to say, with the American culture, but at the same time I want to say the Mexican culture... we got to understand also the why and the how of both cultures. (SS12Samuel-19)

Samuel does not feel more of a sense of belonging towards a particular culture. He feels attached to both cultures, and he does not seem to lean more towards one over the other; yet, he feels that knowing about both is important.

Graciela, similar to Samuel, feels connected to both cultures. Opposite to not being sure about which culture to relate to more, Graciela feels equally as attached to the Mexican culture as she does to the American culture. She considers the following:

I have always considered myself a 50-50. I don't consider me more American or more Mexican. I see myself as someone who has two countries, two different nationalities, that make me who I am. I don't see myself as more Mexican or more American. I see myself like when I'm here in Mexico, I feel equally as Mexican as American; I never choose one or the other. (SS13Graciela-22)

Graciela seems to be aware of her two nationalities, considering herself “a 50-50”. This helps her feel biased towards both cultures and feel equally a part of one culture as to the other. Moreover, Graciela believes that having had contact with both cultures gave her certain knowledge and a larger point of view of what culture is. She adds:

I think it gives me a certain type of knowledge because I see two different worlds, it's like comparing, even though it's bad to compare, it has many different aspects, even the education is way different, I guess. I did middle school in the States, and I also did a year here, and it's very different how they handle it. So I guess it gives me like an open mind sometimes to different things, like not being so close-minded. (SS13Graciela-4)

Graciela believes that she was able to “see two different worlds” due to her past migrating experiences. This seems to have given her a larger perspective of several aspects of both cultures, such as the education system and being more open-minded about how to view things.

Oscar stands at a similar point of view. He believes that he is a result of a mixture of both cultures. He provides:

...I think it's always been a mixture, I think, now I like Mexican food a lot more, I mean, there's no going back, haha, but there's a lot of things from Mexico that I love and that I will never be detached from. There's also things from the States, so I think it's a mixture, but I've also shed some things away, like from the culture I guess, cause I remember when I first arrived from the States, I was a little bit closed minded when it came to trying different things, like the food. And then, I think that's something very American to do, to be very narrow-minded, and like, there's only one way to do it, it's my way, but I think I've shed that away. (SS11Oscar-30)

Oscar, considering himself to be a mixture, believes that he is attached to aspects of both the United States and the Mexican culture. He also believes that he has become more adapted to both, being more open minded and shedding negative things away. Oscar also believes that not everyone processes the experience in the same way. He argues that it is a matter of adapting to both cultures to create a sense of belonging to any culture. He adds the following:

...most people take that experience differently, not all of us process it the same. For example, I've heard of people who were in the States and they completely hated it, and they're here now and they've forgotten everything about the States. I'm more of the kind where, I was there, I loved being there, I'm here now and I also love being here, so I bring in what I remember from the States. (SSII Oscar-41)

Oscar is aware that not all people are able to adapt to a given culture. He seems to position himself in a place where he takes the best of both cultures to portray himself.

While some participants felt related more to certain aspects of the United States culture, and while others felt more related towards certain aspects of the Mexican culture, there were those participants who seemed to be unsure about which culture they can relate to more or those who felt equally belonging to one culture as to the other.

For participants such as Andrew, Samuel, Graciela and Oscar, they seemed to be more open-minded about cultural differences of the United States and Mexico. This helped them take aspects that they are more familiar with in order to portray how they view the world. Whether it was a cultural aspect or a state of mind, their past lived experiences shaped them in order to position themselves differently than those who are culturally related to only one culture. Making reference to the notion of “culture” by many of the participants required an inquiry in what such notion meant for the participants who used it. The following section makes reference to how the participants defined the notion of “culture”.

4.2.1.4 Defining the Notion of “Culture”

The term “culture” was widely used amongst the participants. This called for questioning about the term regarding how the participants defined such or what aspects they related to when referring to culture. As Armenta Delgado (2013) noted, the process of how people construct culture appears to be rather complex because individuals are caught between different sources of knowledge such as family values, upbringing, life experiences,

and professional and public discourses, which they draw on throughout their constructions. Several different notions were presented.

When questioned what she refers to as “culture”, Norma provides a general concept of what culture is for her. She provides the following:

I refer to the traditions, and the way of living... maybe the music, the traditions, and the food... (SSI9Norma-7)

For Norma, aspects that make up culture are traditions, a particular way of living, music, and food.

For Abel, he referred to culture recalling events that he would do occasionally accompanied by his family. He recalls:

Culture, specific activities that a person is related to, it could be like, every Sunday, or going to eat at specific places, like there was a tradition that we had in our family where every Friday night we had to go to this specific restaurant. And that's something that we did all together, and, maybe during football season, get together and enjoy a football game with friends, and that's something I don't do here (in Mexico). (SSI5Abel-3)

Abel refers to traditions and customs as aspects that make up culture. He recalls events and practices that he was accustomed to along with his family.

Similar to Abel, Samuel recalls several traditions as aspects that together make up culture. He provides the following:

...uh, that's what I mean about cultural knowledge... the way of having a barbecue on the weekend. Here in Mexico, they just tend to have steaks, sausage meaning chorizo, as opposed to the States where you have Ballpark Frank's, burgers, barbecue ribs or barbecue chicken, okay, stuff like that... food, festivals, here the festivals are kind of like, the traditional one is the wheel fairs, also, what else? just the common festivals, like I was used to, I grew up with fireworks. Here (in Mexico) we had fireworks only like on the final days of the year, as opposed to in the States; in the festivals you see fireworks, like in the 4th of July, you grow up with fireworks. (SSI2Samuel-16)

Samuel makes comparisons to the customs between a barbecue in the United States and what can be called a *carne asada* in Mexico. He notices the differences between the food provided at both and what he was accustomed to in the United States. He also makes references to festivities and how they differ, such as the case of fireworks and the 4th of July in the United States. For Samuel, the aspects that seem to make up culture are food, customs, traditions, and festivities.

Graciela makes reference to culture as a type of awareness to different aspects of what culture is. She describes:

Culture, for me, it's a way of living. That's how I see it. Like in certain, let's say, depending on what state you live in... like where I'm from, there's a lot of different races, so, you grow up with many different celebrations that you get invited to, so it forms you to have like a more open mind with things, be more open minded about people's religions or preferences. I think that's how I view the culture that you grow up in, cause there's so many varieties, and even though there is judgement, like in anywhere, but they tend to be a little more open minded... (SSI3Graciela-21)

Graciela makes reference to race, celebrations, and religious preferences as aspects that together make up culture. This may allow for a state of mind to be open towards differing varieties amongst these aspects.

Andrew views culture as being more of an individual conception. He proposes:

It's a mixture of behavior, language use, and attitude, let's say, viewpoints, I think that's more individual to individual. (SSI4Andrew-13)

Andrew believes that behaviors, language use, attitudes and viewpoints are the aspects which, for him, make up culture. However, he seems to believe that culture is more individual, in the sense that for each person, culture can be seen differently.

Lorena seems to hold a similar stance as Andrew arguing that the notion of culture can be different for each individual person. She provides the following:

Well, culture is, it's a concept that is very wide, and that many of us people have a different definition of what culture is, but for me, culture is the group of characteristics of a town, of a society, that at the same time, within that society, it is divided into regions. So within the same country, each region can have a different culture, so basically, culture is a set of determining characteristics of that specific place, such as religion, the food, the ideas about specific concepts, that is culture for me. (SSI8Lorena-7)

Lorena argues that each person may have their own preconceived knowledge about what culture is; yet, within the same culture, several small cultures may form a larger one. For her, the aspects that together make up culture are geographic positioning, religion, food, and ideologies.

The participants provided several aspects of what makes up culture for each of them. In this sense, an encompassing definition of the aspects that make up culture can be described. According to the participants, culture is a particular way of living which encompasses aspects such as music, food, traditions, customs, festivities, social gatherings, race, religious preferences, behaviors, language use, attitudes, viewpoints, ideologies and a geographic location which together bring awareness of and play a role in creating or not an open mind about a certain group of people in a certain location. Having described how the

participants made reference to their cultural identity, the following section makes reference to how the participants construct a sense of their self-identity.

4.2.2 Constructing a Self-identity

Relying on their past lived experiences and on the autobiography each participant contains of him or herself, a sense of a self-identity was allowed to be constructed. Giddens (1991) relates self-identity to how the person views him or herself in regards to past events through a process of reflection. Several factors and instances seemed to help in allowing each of the participants arrive to a construction of a sense of who they each are.

Jessie recalls a bit of his past experiences migrating to the United States and how this experience made him become the person he views himself to be. He provides the following:

...I went up there, and everything I know is for a reason. I didn't acquire it just because I sat down and was watching TV though, because I was hungry and it's just a crazy story, but I think it made me better, stronger, and I see life like just take it the way it is... (SSI7Jessie-33)

Jessie makes reference to certain difficult situations he lived in the past. Nevertheless, these experiences made him become a better and stronger person. According to his philosophy of life as to “take it the way it is”, he seems to be willing to take life as it is and be ready for whatever life may bring upon him.

Lorena also recalls her past experiences living in the United States and the impression that she has of the country in which she resided at for a certain amount of time. She describes:

...talking specifically about the U.S., I think it is a country that I would like to return to for a short period of time, and it would be basically to visit my friends and my good teachers that I left over there, but it's not a place that I would like to go to live because I found that life is a bit superficial, and it's really not a place in which I would feel fully satisfied, no; however, I take the positive, my experience was really good, it is a very beautiful country, and I would return only on vacations. (SSI8Lorena-19)

Lorena recalls her positive past experiences living in what she refers to as a beautiful country and the good friends she made along with having good teachers. Nonetheless, she refers to the United States as a country that she would prefer to visit for a relatively short period of time due to a different lifestyle which she is accustomed to in Mexico, and in which she feels more satisfied.

For participants such as Jessie and Lorena, their past experiences helped them shape how they view themselves taking into account their past experiences migrating to and living in the United States for a certain amount of time. The following section makes reference to

how the professional field in which the participants are submerged in plays a role in how they construct their self-identity.

4.2.2.1 Constructing a Self-identity in the Professional Field

While for some participants, relying on their past lived experiences helped them view who they are in a personal sense, for others, their lived past experiences helped them view themselves in a particular manner now that they are submerged in a professional field. Because the self is emergent and reflective of society, it is essential to understand the self and its identities in relationship to the society in which the self is acting, keeping in mind that the self is always acting in a social context in which others exist (Stryker, 1980). In other words, it is essential to view the self in his professional field.

Samuel provides a description of how he views himself in relation to the professional field in which he is in. He provides:

I don't want to just give pride to myself but, I just want to say that I acquired the language fully. I dominate the language. I have an amount of cultural knowledge of the language, which I just want to say I acquired the language, and I just want to help people out. I just want to feel somebody to help others in need. (SSI2Samuel-13)

Samuel recalls being submerged in the language of the United States from an early age, which allowed him to acquire it in a natural manner and gain a high proficiency in it. This experience also helped him obtain cultural knowledge of the country, pushing him to feel the need to help others.

Graciela denotes her case as being unique and different from others'. Similar to Samuel, she also agrees that one's past experiences shape how one develops in a certain field. She elaborates on the following:

I guess I could define myself as something different because my experiences would be very different from someone else's. So I think, even though, even if I hadn't traveled to the States, I still had different experiences from other teachers that would make me unique in my teaching, or my experiences with my past teachers would have formed me to be a certain type of teacher, so, I think, for anyone... it's just your back experiences that you have gone through that make you who you are as a teacher. (SSI3Graciela-24)

Graciela refers to how her past lived experiences have formed who she is as a teacher in her field. Regardless of migrating or not to the United States, she believes that any person's past experiences will shape how the person views him/herself as a teacher.

Andrew, on the other hand, believes that his past experiences migrating to the United States allowed him to decide to become an English teacher. He provides:

I think I wouldn't be where I was if I hadn't done it [migrated]. I wouldn't be an English teacher and I wouldn't see, I wouldn't have a more open view of how things happen. I think it helped open my mind set a little. (SSI4Andrew-29)

Andrew believes that his decision to be an English teacher relies on his experiences migrating to the United States. Also, this helped him have a more open mind as to how things work in the field of English teaching.

Abel holds a similar position as Andrew. Abel mentions that he is happy with how things worked after migrating to the United States and returning back to Mexico. He mentions:

I'm glad it happened that way. I don't know if I would have been able to do what I do if I hadn't done it [migrated]. It's because of what I've been and what I've done, and what I've done has made me who I am [an English teacher]. And at this point I feel very happy, and I want to continue. I found something that I like doing; I enjoy my work, and those experiences have helped me get here. (SSI5Abel-17)

Abel mentions that he is able to be in the field as an English teacher because of his experiences migrating to the United States. He seems to be unsure of where he would be if he had not relied on his past lived experiences of migrating and learning the English language. He now believes that he enjoyed those past lived experiences, which have led him to be an English teacher and be in a field he enjoys to be in.

Lorena, similar to Andrew and Abel, is also grateful for migrating to the United States. Her past lived experiences helped her make the decision of becoming an English teacher. She recalls the following:

...I went with the purpose to learn English, I never had the idea to stay there to live. So once accomplishing the purpose of learning, I came back; however, it was a really nice experience, very productive, that has opened many doors making reference to the professional field. And well, it's something that, definitely, I know I made a good decision at the moment of deciding to travel there. (SSI8Lorena-1)

Lorena recalls making a decision to migrate to the United States with the purpose of learning English. However, her experiences helped her obtain the language and decide to dive into the professional field as an English teacher. She seems to be content with this decision and how things managed to work out for her.

For some participants, recalling their past lived experiences helped them become aware of how they view themselves in a personal and in a professional aspect. Some participants became aware of who they are as people based on their past experiences. Some

other participants relied on such past experiences to become of how they view themselves in the professional field. Notwithstanding whether the participants get a greater sense of who they are as people or as teacher, certainly their past lived experiences help them recall their autobiography in order for them to view themselves in a particular manner. Having made allusion to how the participants construct their self-identity in general and also in a professional field, the following section explores how the participants construct a sense of their social identity.

4.2.3 Constructing a Social Identity

The participants had the opportunity to migrate between borders and have contact with and be submerged in different societies. This process helped lead to the construction of a social identity. The main institutions which helped in this process of social identity construction were the society and the professional work field. For some participants, the process was not as smooth as others'. The following section makes reference to how the participants constructed a social identity at a more personal level.

4.2.3.1 Constructing a Social Identity at a Personal Level

For some participants, the society played an important role in allowing the participants to view a certain social group in a particular way. Consecutively, this helped the participants view themselves regarding their own personal traits and characteristics, and whether or not they feel part of a given social group. Social identity and personal identity can be very close linked because every individual is characterized by social features which show his or her membership to a group on one hand, and personal or individual features on the other (Deschamps & Devos, 1998).

Jessie made a comparison between the society of people in the United States, and people in Mexico regarding how he viewed the society on both sides of the border and how he felt part of such. When making reference to the United States, he points out:

They make you more smart up there [in the U.S.]. They're smarter than us, for real. I mean, any way you see it, and also they don't look at you like a bad thing, if you got tattoos or anything like that, like here in Mexico, you're a bad boy, you're crap, and back in the States it's different though. They see you like normal. It doesn't matter. It's way different; you can do whatever you want up there... (SSI7Jessie-7)

Jessie makes reference to the United States being a society that is free and non-judgmental. In addition, he argues that the society of the United States is relatively smart, arguing that society plays an important role in preparing the citizens for a particular way of living. On the contrary, Jessie positions an argument that the society of Mexico is a judgmental one, and to some degree inhibits people from performing certain activities. This may be the ideology that Jessie has due to the limited time spent in Mexico. He seems aware of the different lifestyles that both countries promote; yet, he is in the process of adapting to the one in Mexico.

Similar to Jessie, Lorena notes being viewed in a particular manner by the society in which she is a part of. She mentions:

I think they view me a bit differently in the sense of simply having traveled outside of Mexico. From the moment that a person travels outside his/her country, our perspective changes. So being called United States, being called Australia, being called China, England, it doesn't matter the country, I think it is simply the fact of having traveled outside of Mexico, and they view us a bit differently. (SSI8Lorena-12)

Lorena believes that she is viewed different by the Mexican society for the fact of having traveled outside her home town. She holds a belief that people who travel outside of Mexico are viewed differently for the sake of being outside the country.

For some participants, the society played an important role in helping them feel identified or not with a certain social group. They were able to become aware of certain personal characteristics which they could relate to belonging or not to a particular group of people.

In a similar manner, for some participants, the society and their professional work field played a negative role in allowing them to feel part of an institution or not. These difficult situations helped the participants grasp logic of feeling rejected by a certain social group. Some participants experienced these difficult situations while being in the United States, while others happened to experience difficulties adapting back to Mexico.

Samuel recalls a negative perception in which he believes the society had towards him while living in the United States. When questioned about any negative experience he can recall living, he provides the following:

I would have to say the way of dressing, because my way of dressing was so different. Sometimes people would tell me, hey! Where did you buy your clothes? Or, why do you wear that? Like, why do I wear what? This is how I feel comfortable with, and then, well, I had negative perceptions towards why I dressed that way because being bald and having a goatee, well, maybe he's into a negative

lifestyle, negative lifestyle meaning that if I was in a gang, or something like that, but no, it's just, it's just a way of living through hip hop. (SSI2Samuel-4)

Samuel considers he was viewed in a negative way because of the image he projected by dressing in a particular way. He seems to have attempted to want to project a certain image, yet he also seems to have felt judged as being involved in a negative lifestyle.

Andrew felt similar to Samuel. Andrew recalls feeling excluded from the society because he was a foreigner of the place where he lived at. When questioned whether or not he ever faced any negative experiences adapting to a particular place, Andrew refers to the following:

Yes, because, well, when I was a child I didn't feel it as much, and because I was in a city that had many people from different countries, because of the university, it wasn't so strong, but you could feel like an outsider a little bit... (SSI4Andrew-3)

Andrew recalls this experience when he was a child. He felt a bit out of place because he was not from the place where he was living at the moment. In order to overcome this negative experience, Andrew decided to rely on people who felt as if they were going through a similar experience as him. He provides:

Usually people from different countries, other than, that weren't born in that city, or in that state, usually we hung out together. So it wasn't so much us, Mexicans with Mexicans, it was Mexicans, Indians, uh, Afghans, we were all together. (SSI4Andrew-4)

Andrew reminisces overcoming this negative experience by relating to others who were in a similar case as him. He refers to "us" as the immigrant Mexicans to signal being different than the rest. He opts for gathering with people who were also foreign to the place where they lived at during that time.

Samuel felt difficult experiences both in the United States and in Mexico due to his linguistic ability and choice. When questioned whether or not he experienced any difficult situations adapting to either the United States or Mexico, he points out:

Yes, definitely...the way I dress, the way I think, and the way I speak, I have that American accent. My Spanish has an accent due to my usage of English. (SSI2Samuel-20)

Samuel recalls being discriminated upon his preference for dressing in a particular way, his way of thinking, and having an accent when speaking both English and Spanish. He also recalls experiencing something similar while being in Mexico. He adds:

...being here in Mexico...I fixed my Spanish because my Spanish was, how Mexicans here kind of like discriminate Mexicans in the States, meaning that their Spanish is mocho [short], meaning that you put English words into the way you speak Spanish, so I can say I just fixed my Spanish. (SSI2Samuel-6)

Samuel seems to have been discriminated upon both in the United States and in Mexico due to his usage of the Spanish language. What he believes he did to have overcome this negative experience was to focus on improving his usage of the Spanish language.

Jessie also experienced something similar to Samuel while being back in Mexico. Jessie recalls experiencing a difficult situation when being in Mexico and having the need to express himself in the Spanish language. He expresses the following:

Actually, when I got here, fourteen, fifteen, like sixteen months ago, kind of, in a way because of my accent, my Spanish was just bad, short. Sometimes I would just stay quiet because I wouldn't know what to say back to them. So yeah, sometimes I felt like that, but not anymore. (SSI7Jessie-17)

Jessie also experienced a sense of having “short” Spanish. He acknowledges that his usage of the Spanish language was bad, to which he preferred to stay quiet in order to not make use of such.

For some participants, experiencing a difficult situation allowed them to feel part or not of a given society at a personal level. These difficulties were faced both on the United States and the Mexico side of the border. However, some participants were able to overcome these negative experiences to better adapt to a certain social group. The following section makes reference to how the participants constructed a sense of a social identity from a professional inclination.

4.2.3.2 Constructing a Social Identity at a Professional Level

The society seemed to play an important role in viewing the participants in a certain manner. This led the participants to feel accepted or not as a part of a social group. Also, a certain position that the participants were given also seemed to be influential. Bucholtz (1999) sustains that individuals occupy a particular social identity by virtue of a position they hold within the social structure in which they are in. In this sense, the participants developed a social identity through being positioned by their professional practice. The main institutions which were involved in this process were school and social gatherings such as student-teacher relationships and colleague relationships.

Oscar believes that his lived experiences migrating between Mexico and the United States helps his students view him in a particular manner. This also leads to them being curious about Oscar's lived experiences. When questioned about how he believes he is viewed by his students, Oscar mentions:

...I guess, it just opens them up, it just like gives them a bigger point of view on what culture is I guess, and, for example they're always curious about me, like, where do you come from? How... why do you speak English so well? And I tell them about my experience and I guess they have like this moment of ahhh, so that's why. And they get curious and they ask...they start getting curious about it. (SSI1Oscar-10)

Oscar believes that his background helps his students become more aware of cultural aspects of the United States. Also, as Oscar believes, his students become more curious about his past once they are aware of the migrating experiences he lived and the reason of his proficiency in the English language.

Similar to Oscar, Yesenia believes that her language usage has a role in how she is viewed by her students and colleagues. She comments the following:

I've only noticed that some tell me, oh you've been to the U.S., or oh! I like your accent, or only those things. (SSI6Yesenia-19)

Yesenia believes that her students and colleagues relate her accent when using the English language to her being in the United States. It seems that there is something her students can hear and make a connection to with someone who has lived in the United States.

Similar to Yesenia, Graciela believes that her language usage also plays a role in how she is viewed by her colleagues and students. When questioned about which aspects she is viewed to have different than other teachers, Graciela responds:

Maybe how I pronounce, I don't know, maybe it's my accent. It's sometimes different, but I guess that comes with any type of learning. Some people have different accents, but people have told me... other students or teachers have commented that I have a good accent, that it sounds American. I don't know what that means, but it sounds American. So I guess that's the only thing that would probably make me different than other teachers, that they say that I speak it very well. (SSI3Graciela- 26)

Graciela believes that her accent plays an important role in her being viewed in a certain manner compared to other English teachers. She becomes aware of such accent because of her students and colleagues making it explicit for her. This results in Graciela sounding "American" because of the accent she is able to portray in her speech.

Andrew has also been signaled out by his students because of his accent. When questioned how others perceived his accent, Andrew provides the following:

...it sounds a little bit American, and I have compared myself with native speakers and I don't sound like them, but for students, they can't really tell that difference. They just say it sounds different than how I speak, so they like that. (SS14Andrew-10)

Andrew believes that his students view his accent being similar to an American accent. Although his accent is perceived to be somewhat different than that of a native speaker, he believes that his students enjoy this difference.

Samuel notes that he is seen as a more experienced teacher who, like Oscar, brings in cultural knowledge and argues to facilitate the learning process to his students. When questioned about how he is viewed by his colleagues and students, Samuel recalls:

...they view me as somebody that has experience with the language as opposed to a teacher learning the language here in Mexico, and then just teaching it. I bring like the cultural knowledge of the language, examples. I know how to facilitate the language towards my learners. (SS12Samuel-11)

Samuel believes to be noticed due to his developed language usage, compared to a person who learned the language here in Mexico. His experiences migrating to the United States allow him to provide cultural examples leading to the language learning process being more facilitated towards his students.

Similar to Samuel, Abel makes reference to being viewed in a certain manner due to his experiences migrating to the United States, along with his experiences as a teacher. When questioned about how he is viewed by his students and colleagues, Abel responds:

They can see that I have more experience, I have more knowledge, they can see that I know. I'm not just person that is teaching because he speaks English, well I speak English, but I also can tell you about specific places. I can tell you about the life, some aspects of the culture; I can tell you how to go about things in a certain situation, so that's interesting for them. (SS15Abel-8)

Abel believes to be viewed as a more experienced teacher in terms of his professional and migrating experiences. He believes to be viewed in a certain manner because he is able to rely on his past experiences in which he was able to be in direct contact with the target culture to provide cultural information for his students, which they view as interesting in the sense of being presented as a more knowledgeable teacher.

For some participants, society played an important role in helping them create a social identity at a professional level. Being submerged in a professional educational field, some participants were viewed by their students as having particular characteristics, as well as their colleagues. Aspects such as providing more cultural knowledge, being signaled out for their pronunciation, accent, and English language usage, as well as being viewed as

experienced teachers were all very important for the participants to be viewed in a particular manner by the institution in which they developed as English teachers.

Hence, while for some participants, the society played a negative role in excluding them from a particular social group, for other participants, similar negative experiences helped them feel rejection towards an institution in their professional area. Some participants recalled difficult experiences while developing as professionals in their school institution.

Oscar recalls being viewed differently because of his appearance being related to racial stereotypes. It was not until there was a clarification of his past that he is better understood. He provides the following:

...I'm pretty sure they view me differently after I tell them that, because, I don't know, I guess before, they look at me and my appearance of dark skin and everything, and they probably think, oh he's Mexican right, cause I am, but, he's been here the entire time and he learned English here, but then I tell them about this experience and they're like, oh so you do speak like a native speaker. I guess telling them that changes their view, like before, they said, oh you speak Mexican Spanish, but then, oh it's native, it's strange. (SS11Oscar-12)

Oscar feels as if he is viewed differently by his students at the institution where he works as an English teacher. It is not until his students become aware of his experiences traveling to the United States that he is viewed in a different manner. This also helps his students change their view towards the language use Oscar portrays of the English language. Once being able to break through the racial stereotypes, Oscar's students are able to obtain more than just the language by the instruction that Oscar is able to provide.

Norma recalls an incident in which her colleagues suggest that she should not work as an English teacher at a particular institution because of the proficiency she has of the English language. She remembers:

One of them has told me; oh you pronounce very well, you shouldn't be here... (SS19Norma-17)

Norma highlights being signaled out because of her proficiency of the English language. She was viewed as being superior to her colleagues due to the pronunciation she possesses of the English language, being suggested indirectly to look for a better position or for a job opportunity outside of the institution in which she developed in as a teacher.

Contrary to Norma, Oscar lived an experience of being viewed as inferior by his colleagues. He mentions how he was designated to teach lower level students, to which he was unaware of the cause. He recalls:

...there was this comment that my coordinator made the other day, it was me and a colleague, we were in the classroom, and I teach the lower levels, and that other teacher teaches the higher levels, and it was just the way that she said it, the other teacher asked. She was talking, referring to her carga academica [academic load], and she said, oh, it says here I'm going to be teaching two hundred, and then the coordinator says, oh well I wouldn't give you the low levels, I would give the low levels to you, and that sounded kind of like, and why do I get the lower levels? Why wouldn't she get the lower levels? And because she is like an American... something there didn't make, didn't quite fit, why would she say it like that? (SSII Oscar-18)

Oscar felt discriminated upon his coordinator at work. He felt that he was capable of working with higher level students; yet, his coordinator assigned him the lower levels. He seemed quite unsure of the reason why the coordinator acted in that way, although he felt as if he was put into an unfair situation, mainly considering how his colleague looked “like an American”. His racial stereotype seemed to come into play in which speaking like an American and having a fluent accent was not necessary; Oscar may have also needed to look like a native of the United States in the sense of being blonde and having light skin.

While for some participants, experiencing certain difficulties allowed them to feel part or not of a given society at a more personal level, for other participants, their lived negative experiences were present at a more professional level. These situations involved several incidents in which the participants were discriminated in a positive and a negative manner. The following section describes how the participants constructed a social identity of being viewed as a “good” English teacher.

4.2.3.3 Constructing a Social Identity of a “Good” English Teacher

For some participants, the professional environment in which they were in allowed others to view them in a particular manner. The people with whom the participants had communication with at their work place (mainly colleagues and students), knew of the migration background of the participants. In addition, teachers obtain a sense of cultural capital through having migrated between both countries (Petron, 2003). The obtained cultural capital lead to helping the colleagues and students view the participants based on certain ideologies and expectations, constructing a sense of a “good” and a “different” English teacher.

Yesenia believes that she is perceived to know how to teach English because her colleagues are aware that she learned English in the United States. She notices the following:

...well I've noticed that some teachers... they ask me where I learned English, and since they know where I learned English, they tell me, oh so you do know English; you do know how to teach, and I'm like, uh, okay, the fact that me going to the U.S. doesn't mean that I can teach, but they see it like that... (SSI6Yesenia-27)

Yesenia believes that her colleagues perceive her as knowing how to teach the language due to her learning English in the United States. She is aware that living in a country where English is spoken and learning the language in that country is not enough to teach it. However, her colleagues seem to hold that belief.

Similar to Yesenia, Graciela is also viewed in a certain way by her colleagues due to her English proficiency because she learned the language in the United States. Graciela provides the following:

I think sometimes teachers view me as, like, I know everything, which I don't, and, even when they hear that you're from the States, they sometimes believe that you know everything about the language, how it's formed, and even though you only speak it, and you could probably write and read it and everything, you don't really know the structures in detail, so sometimes that's like a mixed judgement that teachers have. (SSI3Graciela-14)

Graciela believes that she is viewed as a walking English dictionary; that is, she is viewed as knowing much about linguistic aspects regarding the English language. This is a belief that her colleagues seem to have based on them knowing that Graciela learned English in the United States. Nonetheless, Graciela seems to argue that this belief is untrue.

Samuel also holds a similar perspective others have towards him. Moreover, he believes that his experience in the field and his proficiency in the language allow him to be put in a position above other teachers. He mentions:

I don't want to be judgmental, but sometimes I think that they feel kind of like intimidated because, here's somebody that knows the language fully, has full dominance, and sometimes they feel in jeopardized towards if I'm going to take their job away, or maybe, some of their students...they go with the English speaking teacher, just go with him, because he knows, he tends to know more, or sometimes a teacher feels like less because their students look for me for examples, or maybe facilitating more the language towards them. (SSI2Samuel-12)

Samuel believes that he is perceived as superior by his colleagues in the sense of his English language dominance. His colleagues seem to feel inferior because their students reach towards Samuel for further explanations or any given example of a certain linguistic item.

Abel sustains a similar belief as Samuel. Abel also believes that his colleagues feel inferior to a certain degree regarding their experience and capabilities as English teachers. Abel provides the following:

I think there is an implicit difference, not necessarily it has to be something to talk about, because some local teachers might feel intimidated by somebody else that has more experience, or that has learned the language in a different context. It's not something that I go around mentioning, hey! Yes, I have more experience than you, I've been to more places than you, I speak better than you. That's not necessarily true, no, but it does, I think it does weigh in the back of the mind of the person when someone else seems to be better prepared as far as having more interaction in other cultures, or in other situations... (SSI5Abel-11)

Abel holds a belief that other colleagues may feel intimidated, positioning him at a higher level due to his experience learning the English language in a country where the language is mainly spoken, his proficiency using the English language, having an academic preparation to teach the language, and being in direct contact with other cultures.

With regards to the linguistic abilities, Graciela makes reference to a belief that her colleagues have. She seems to be aware that her colleagues prefer teachers with an accent different to the local one. She comments:

I think there is even in the educational system, they always prefer teachers who are foreign, the native teachers from the country. So I guess in a way they do make a difference, they always prefer someone who is, let's say, a foreigner. (SSI3Graciela-17)

Graciela notices a tendency of a preference for native English-speaking teachers, or teachers who have a foreign accent because they are believed to be more proficient in the language. This also leads to a difference between those teachers who learn English in a local context and those who learn it abroad.

Andrew also is aware of the wants for English teachers regarding their use of the English language. He makes reference to a desire that students may have when considering certain traits of their English teachers. He notes:

...the students, they seem to prefer for a teacher to have been at least some time in an English-speaking country. I tell them that's not important, but, some people like it for us to. (SSI4Andrew-7)

Andrew perceives that some people prefer English teachers to have spent some time in an English-speaking country as lived experiences may result in more knowledge for teaching. Andrew argues that this may not be so important; yet, this time spent in a country where the English language is mainly spoken may be somehow reflected in oral production of the language.

The professional environment in which some participants were situated in, led to them being viewed in a particular manner. Their colleagues and students held several beliefs about them, which lead to certain views towards the participants. This brought about the

participants constructing a sense of a “good” English teacher considering how they were viewed. Aspects such as knowing where the participants learned the language, assumptions of linguistic competence and proficiency, accents, and certain preferences towards English teachers were all important to consider when becoming aware of how the professional environment viewed such English teachers. Having described how the participants made reference to a construction of a social identity at a personal and at a professional level, the following section makes reference to how the participants constructed the notion of the transnational English teacher.

4.2.4 Constructing the Transnational English Teacher

For the participants, being aware of their migrating transitions related to crossing the border and being able to live on both the United States and Mexico helped them become aware that others share similar experiences. This resulted in the participants constructing the identity of whom they refer to as a transnational. The following section makes reference to how the participants viewed the linguistics considered as characteristic elements of a transnational.

4.2.4.1 The Linguistics of a Transnational

Some participants referred to identifying and relating to other transnationals based on their linguistic abilities. Transnationals may tend to give English a high value and relate to its importance (Petron & Greybeck, 2014) while seeking to pass on such knowledge on to the next generations (Petron, 2003). In this sense, the identity of a transnational was constructed upon linguistic abilities such as linguistic competence and performance. Several resources that the participants used to identify and relate to another transnational were mentioned.

Oscar mentions that identifying a person with similar past lived experiences is rather difficult; yet, he is able to rely on the accent that the person has to initially question whether or not the person also lived similar migrating experiences. When questioned about how he can identify other people who have lived similar experiences as him, he notes the following:

That's kind of difficult for me to do unless I start speaking, talking to the person. They tell me a little bit about themselves. So, I guess the first thing I do is listen to the accent, and then based on that we have a conversation. (SSII Oscar-27)

Oscar comments that listening to the person's accent is the first step in identifying whether or not they share a similar background. A conversation follows in which the other person is intended to provide further information.

Graciela also argues that these people have a certain accent which helps identify them. She notices:

Sometimes cause of their accent, usually like when they've been in the states they have different accent. Sometimes the accent gives it away... (SSI3Graciela-8)

Similar to Oscar, Graciela believes that the person's accent is helpful in identifying their background. She believes that people who have been in the United States acquire a similar accent when speaking English. Graciela extends the list of characteristics regarding the linguistic abilities of other transnationals. She elaborates on the following:

Someone who knows the language, probably relates to the culture, and social-wise of how it's used, like in informal ways, not so much formal, which is really rare that you actually speak formally with other people, it's more spontaneous in a natural way... (SSI3Graciela-19)

Graciela argues that other than an accent, other transnationals are also aware of cultural and pragmatic uses of the language.

Samuel also provides a list of characteristics that these transnational people have regarding their linguistic abilities. He mentions:

Their way of speaking, their fluency, their accent... as an example... your way of speaking towards me. I can identify you as you were in the States just by your accent, your fluency, your English is clear and direct, and is short. You don't mumble through your English. You don't hesitate to ask a question; it comes out automatic. (SSI2Samuel-23)

Samuel denotes that people who are also transnationals share linguistic abilities such as having a certain accent, being fluent in the language, and having ease when producing the language.

Abel suggests that transnationals produce more valuable language because of their experience in different contexts. When questioned about how he can describe the linguistic abilities of a transnational, he expresses the following:

Someone that can provide valuable input because of experience, because of more knowledge of different contexts, and because of the use of the language in real context. (SSI5Abel-15)

Abel further elaborates on what he refers to by real context. He adds:

Real context is more like, not just the general English that you learn in the classroom, it's the English that you speak in the street, that you use in everyday life, which is different. On the street you talk different to different people, you change variation as you experience variation, and it's more colloquial. You can

use different expressions, some of those expressions are not taught in the classroom. (SSI5Abel-16)

Abel argues that transnationals are able to provide more valuable language production because of their experiences acquiring and using the language in different contexts. This process results in using a more colloquial language variation when needed, something that is not learned formally through instruction.

Andrew believes that he can relate to other transnationals as being more open towards the use of the English language, not considering so much the mistakes made when producing such language. He notices:

They are usually less idealistic about the U.S., and more open-minded regarding the language and mistakes of the language. (SSI4Andrew-22)

Andrew believes that other transnationals have a more open mind towards the usage of the English language, in which making mistakes while producing such language is not taken into account as much.

Jessie believes that learning the language in the United States makes it better for people with characteristics of a transnational to be positioned at a higher language level in regards to several aspects. He argues:

Learning English...going to the United States makes you get better at it, your pronunciation, reading, writing, the knowledge, the comprehension, it gets way better. (SSI7Jessie-13)

Jessie believes that people who learned English in the United States have a relatively high level of the language in aspects such pronouncing the language, reading the language, writing the language, and understanding the language.

Some participants constructed the identity of a transnational upon linguistic abilities they were able to notice in people with characteristics of having a transnational background. Aspects such as having an accent, speaking informally, speaking fluently, being able to use different variations, being more open-minded about the language and its production, as well as having different expectations from the learners, and being able to learn English in the United States were all important for the participants to identify these people as having such linguistic characteristics. The following section aims at describing how the participants reacted when encountering others with similar transnational experiences.

4.2.4.2 Encountering Other Transnationals

Some participants referred to several instances or commonalities with other transnationals. It can be argued that transnationals tend to stand out from other non-transnationals (Petron, 2003). When encountering other people whom they believe to also share a similar background as them, several instances occurred.

Oscar believes that encountering other transnationals results in a positive experience and an opportunity to dialogue about past similar experiences. He provides:

I think the first thing that happens when you speak with another transnational is like this nostalgia kind of thing. Then, you start talking about the US, and then, oh where are you from? You start saying, oh I'm from Chicago, or where are you from? I am from Idaho. Then you just start talking about the States. I think that's the first thing you do when you meet someone else that's also been in the States. (SSI1Oscar-25)

Oscar denotes that encountering other people with similar backgrounds as him results in a nostalgic stage in which past lived experiences are reminisced and brought up into a conversation in which several livings are able to be recalled.

Andrew holds a similar stance arguing that many topics are common to talk about with people who have also had similar experiences. He expresses:

Well...it's little things, for example sports...basketball, American football, politics. We also talk about U.S. politics, not just Mexican politics, and, even more right now...we just have more similar topics that we can talk about. (SSI4Andrew-24)

Andrew believes that being familiar with certain aspects is what leads to being able to talk about similar topics. Though the topics may seem relatively basic and common, these create the possibility to talk about similar concepts that can be shared.

Similarly, Abel believes that being able to carry out certain activities while living in the United States gave him a certain type of knowledge. According to Abel, these experiences seem to be the basis for communicating with other people who have also lived similar experiences as him. He recalls:

Those were activities that I didn't have here in Mexico, and here in Mexico, the activities are totally different. So whenever I find someone that has been to the U.S. or is from the U.S., uh, and we start talking, then some topics might come up that we can relate to, that I wouldn't be able to speak with someone here in Mexico. (SSI5Abel-4)

Abel argues that the ordinary activities that people do are different in Mexico and in the United States. Having the opportunity to encounter people who have also lived in the United States allows for a conversation to be based on similar lived experiences.

Yesenia also argues about the opportunity to hold a conversation with people who know about certain experiences due to them being familiar with such or having lived them. She observes the following:

We share conversations, like topics, and then we say, oh when I went to, I don't know, X place, it was like this and that, or when I went to X other place it was like this and that, and we see what things were in common, and what wasn't common. (SSI6Yesenia-24)

Yesenia believes that being familiar with living in certain places of the United States allows for a conversation to flow because of the familiarity of living in certain places. Having the opportunity to talk about differences of certain places, apart from sharing mutual experiences, also enables a conversation to occur.

Jessie claims that when encountering another transnational, a similar characteristic that is presented is being open minded. He argues that this results in having a similar point of view towards certain elements. He provides:

...it's just, it's a similar point of view though. If you go the United States and stay there for at least five, ten years, you're going to see a big change, because you're going to think differently, like open minded. Everything is pretty much about an open mind back there. You can do whatever you want and you do it open minded, without thinking, oh, they're going to judge me... (SSI7Jessie-16)

Jessie believes that encountering other transnationals relates to establishing similar point of views. Once having traveled to the United States, Jessie argues that one sees a change in regards to a way of thinking, particularly in regards to having a more open mind. This results to being able to carry out certain activities without being judged, something others with similar experiences may relate to.

For some participants, encountering other transnationals results in reminiscing past lived experiences. This also results in sharing these experiences thinking that the other person will also be familiar with a given topic. So whether a conversation is held making reference to a certain activity, a past lived experience, or about a certain preference, it seems that these people find it relatively easy to hold a conversation with someone who has lived a similar past migrating between both sides of the United States-Mexico border. The following section concerns how transnationals tend to form what can be referred to as small cultures and/or communities of practice.

4.2.4.3 The Formation of Small Cultures and Communities of Practice Amongst Transnationals

Some participants mentioned relating to other people with similar transnational experiences. The participants mentioned that these people may tend to share many similarities amongst each other. An important characteristic of transnationals is that they often cluster together to stand apart from others who do not share similar characteristics (Petron, 2003). This may result in the formation of small cultures and communities of practice.

Samuel mentions relating to other transnationals because of the many similarities that they share. He notes:

Yeah, I relate myself more towards English teachers who were in the States, who grew up in the States. I share more similarities with them, as opposed to English teachers here in Mexico. (SSI2Samuel-21)

Samuel comments that he relates more to people who share a similar background as him. He believes that these people share more lived experiences with him because of their migration process, opposed to those who have only been in Mexico.

Jessie also believes that he relates more to people with similar migrating experiences as him. He argues that these people are more friendly and are more aware of the experiences they have lived. He describes:

I do feel more comfortable talking with people who have been in the States though, because you know what's going on and like that, if you talk with a person here in Mexico, you might be kind of shy to ask some type of things. If you're talking with someone who has been in the United States as long as you've been, it's more like, sup bro. It's more... I don't know, more friendly though. (SSI7Jessie-21)

Jessie comments that he feels less shy to talk with people who have also lived in the United States. He believes that a conversation with a person with these characteristics is easier to carry on because of the friendliness that may come into play.

Lorena also believes that she feels more inclination towards people who have also lived similar experiences as her. When questioned whether or not she relates more to people with similar experiences as her, she responds the following:

I do feel that I lean more towards them. I feel that I do have more things to share with these people that have the desire to travel, of knowing about other languages, other people, other cultures. I identify myself with them more than that person who simply is there, who does not have any interests other than getting up for work, and that's it. (SSI8Lorena-16)

Lorena denotes that she connects more towards people who also lived in the United States. She denotes specifically that she leans more towards people with similar desires as her such as traveling, meeting other places and being in touch with other cultures. Lorena provides further information about the topics that are commented on with other people who have lived similar experiences and who have the same desires as her. She adds:

For example, we talk about the weather, we talk about the perspective, how some people in the U.S., the concept they have of studying, of learning, how they set certain objectives, and they always search for the way to compete amongst them and reach that objective, so when we talk about those type of things, that is when I make reference about what I lived the time I was over there. (SSI8Lorena-10)

Lorena highlights that topics such as learning certain things and reaching certain objectives become present when she interacts with people who have similar experiences as her. This is when she believes that she makes reference to the experiences she lived while being in the United States.

For some participants, having the opportunity to relate to and gather with people who have similar past experiences as them resulted in forming small cultures. For other participants, gathering with and interacting with people with similar desires and interests resulted in forming communities of practice. For the formation of these two, a past migrating experience between the United States and Mexico seemed to be the basis for such relationships to occur. As I have described how transnationals tend to gather to form small cultures and communities of practice, the following section covers how the participants construct a sense of a professional identity.

4.2.5 Constructing a Professional Identity

Being submerged in a professional atmosphere, some participants made reference to constructing a professional identity. Whether the students or other colleagues helped in the construction of such, being an English teacher helped the participants become more aware and view themselves in a certain manner. Several instances helped create this type of identity. The following section describes how the transnational English teacher portrays a set of linguistic abilities.

4.2.5.1 The Portrayed Linguistic Abilities of the Transnational English Teacher

The transnational English teachers of this research project continuously seem to signal themselves differently than other non-transnational English teachers. Petron (2009) argues that transnational English teachers most often rely on their transnational cultural capital, referred to as the linguistic and cultural knowledge acquired as a result of transnational experiences, to present such to their students. As the participants were signaled out by the society according to their linguistic abilities, this characteristic also seemed to play an important role in them being viewed in a certain manner by their students and colleagues in their work area developing as professionals.

Oscar seems to be aware of how his students view his language use. He believes that they constantly make comparisons of his language use with contrast to other teachers'. He notices:

I think it's not so much what I do, I think it's how others view it. I think they start making comparisons to other teachers, like for example, I have a whole bunch of prepa [high school] students here at the language school, and they have their teachers at the prepa, they learned their English here, I mean it's good and everything, but they learned it here, and they can tell the difference between my English and their English. (SS11Oscar-13)

Oscar notes that his students make comparisons between how he uses the English language, and how other teachers who learned English here in Mexico use the language. Regardless of having a high proficiency in the language, Oscar's students seem to notice a difference between learning English in Mexico and in the United States.

Similarly, Graciela believes that her students find it more interesting for her to have learned English in the United States. She arrives to the following:

...I guess they use you as an example of how it is, but it also would be like relating sometimes. Students find it more exciting that you've actually been there and you can actually give them like more detail of how the language is. (SS13Graciela-13)

Graciela concludes that her students find it more exciting that the teacher learns the English language in an English-speaking country. She infers that this acquisition process is related to being able to give further detail of how the language works. Graciela also believes that acquiring the English language in the United States and using it more constantly are advantages for her. She adds:

I think the experience of actually using the language 24-7, and it's more like you have to, and here [Mexico]... it's very rare that they speak it with other teachers. I guess it's more like, over there you have to be speaking it all the time, so it gives you like an advantage against teachers that only learn it for a foreign language, not when you're bilingual. (SS13Graciela-16)

Graciela seems to believe that acquiring the language in the United States and using the language more frequently gives transnational English teachers an advantage over those English teachers who learned English outside an English speaking country.

Similarly, Norma also believes that her English usage is different. She mentions that her students are able to identify her pronunciation and link it with knowing the language. When questioned if her students view her differently than other English teachers, she suggests the following:

I think that is resembled especially in the pronunciation maybe, because when my students hear me speak, they're like, you really know English, and maybe that's because they say it, because they listen to my pronunciation, and it's not that bad.
(SS19Norma-9)

Norma is aware that her pronunciation showed through her speech seems to be an important factor for her students to notice. They seem to view it as a pronunciation similar to a person who knows more knowledge of the English language.

As discussed above, for some participants, their linguistic abilities were able to be recognized by their students and colleagues. Whether the students noticed a difference in how the language was used, whether the students find it interesting that their teacher learned the language in the United States and use the language frequently, or whether the students notice a marked pronunciation by their teacher, certainly the abilities that the participants had when using the language helped them be viewed in a certain manner by their peers and students while developing as professionals in the field of English teaching. The following section denotes how the influence of others helped in the participants making the decision to become English teachers.

4.2.5.2 The Influence of Others

As Richards (2000) argues, “nothing happens of itself; somewhere there is a history, somehow there are consequences” (p. 12). In this sense, for some participants, making the decision to become an English teacher was a decision influenced from past teachers. Some participants made reference to their past teachers influencing in them teaching in a particular way. Other participants made reference to attempting to reach a certain expertise as a teacher based on past experience with teachers who marked their lives.

Andrew initially makes reference to leaning towards a certain field because of a positive experience with a teacher during middle school in the United States. He refers to the following:

My background as to teachers are from my time there, but actually, I studied biology because of my science teacher in sixth grade in the United States. (SSI4Andrew-30)

Andrew recalls having a high level of influence from his teachers while living in the United States. He is aware of making the decision to study biology because of his science teacher while studying middle school in the United States.

Lorena also mentions having influence from past teachers while she was living in the United States also. She mentions:

...I had a group of very good teachers when I was in the U.S., and I think that now that I am teaching English, this has somehow influenced in me in the sense that I want to be the best that I can as a teacher in honor of those teachers that I had, so I want to somehow reflect their great quality as teachers. I want to become like them, and I think that if I had not had that experience when I left Mexico, maybe I would be any teacher, but now I want to be the best I can be as a teacher. (SSI8Lorena-8)

Lorena believes that her desire to become a better teacher is related to her teachers that she had while living in the United States. She seems to feel the urge to become the best teacher she can be in honor of those role models she had.

Graciela also believes that her past experiences shape who she is now. However, she also believes that each person is unique in the sense that not everyone experiences the same lived experiences or acknowledges them in the same way. She provides:

I guess I could define myself as something different because my experiences would be very different from someone else's. So I think even if I hadn't traveled to the States, I still had different experiences from other teachers that would make me unique in my teaching, or my experiences with my past teachers would have formed me to be a certain type of teacher. So I think for anyone, it's not necessarily that; it's just your back experiences that you have gone through that make you who you are as a teacher. (SSI3Graciela-24)

Graciela argues that certainly one's past teachers may play a role in influencing who one becomes. Yet, she believes that each person has a unique story and background that make each person who they are, different from the rest.

For these participants, teachers they met throughout their life played an important role in influencing them in becoming English teachers as well as how they go about in their teaching. It can be argued, then, that each person's past experiences shape them to become who they are now, as well as their desires to become better teachers. The following section

focuses on describing how the participants describe bringing in their past experiences as transnationals into their teaching practice.

4.2.5.3 Bringing in Transnational Epistemologies

Ernst-Slavit (2000) describes borderlands as “those unintentional, multicultural spaces where cultures meet” (p. 251) and where those submerged in these “discover similar shared beliefs and rituals and are able to construct new ones” (ibid, p. 251). This leads to what can be referred to as borderlands epistemologies; that is, the experiences lived as a transnational (Petron, 2003, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014). With regards to constructing a professional identity, some participants made recall relating to the United States culture when going about in their teaching. The recalling of their transnational epistemologies resulted in them being viewed in a particular manner by their students and colleagues.

Initially, Oscar makes mention to talking about certain people from the United States. He also believes that making comparisons with people here from Mexico may be useful for his students. He notes:

I think there's also a lot of influence in the activities I use, most of them are, for example...I had some activities where there were different biographies, some people were like famous actors from the States like Neyo from the Matrix, Keanu Reeves, and some students didn't know, but then I'd explain a little bit and I'd make comparisons to actors here, and, and even that, like making comparisons, like having Carlos Santana, and then talking about a musician over there, like having both knowledge I think it helps a lot. (SSIIOscar-8)

Oscar is aware of bringing in cultural references from the United States. He is also aware that these may require further explanation for a better comprehension by part from the students. Oscar also notices that bringing in cultural references from Mexico and comparing both may be more useful for his students.

Samuel believes that he plays an important role of implementing a more colloquial language towards his students. He seems to think that this may be helpful towards them. He mentions:

I just bring my examples of living in the States, we find a similar topic, like, I give just personal experiences to implement examples for my students to understand what the book is trying to say. Like for example, let's say that Bill went to a park, and he's like uh... I didn't catch my ride, a Spanish speaker here was like, a ride, like riding a bicycle or what? Living in the States and acquiring that cultural knowledge, catching a ride meaning I didn't catch the bus, or I didn't catch a taxi, or I didn't catch, I don't know, a friend or a relative, giving them a lift to school. (SSI2Samuel-9)

Samuel comments that implementing the use of chunks of language related to a more colloquial use helps his students become more aware of actual language use in an ordinary context. Although this may require further explanation, Samuel suggests that being aware of such linguistic aspects is important for his students.

Andrew believes that expressing cultural aspects from the United States helps in preparing his students for when they are required to travel to the country. He recalls:

When, for example, when students tell me oh I'm going to go to California, I haven't been to California in the United States, but what can I expect about the school? And I tell them about how the school system works there...and stuff like that, or I have to talk to this person and he only speaks English because it's at work, how should I tell them? No, I'm just, we usually start with these phrases, etc. Okay, a lot of people work in the industrial zone, so they ask me how to write mails, and I just, well you know, the basic rules of what is proper in a mail or not, and what's expected, and that's mostly from American culture, or work culture. (SSI4Andrew-12)

Andrew seems cognizant of the needs of his students. He may rely on his lived experiences as wealth to inform his students. This is resembled in him approaching them in a certain manner to teach them aspects such as how to address someone or how to elaborate a written text in a particular manner.

Abel sustains that having the opportunity to be in direct contact with the American culture results in him being able to portray cultural aspects of such. This in turn results in helping his students change their point of view. He elaborates:

These experiences have helped me because, otherwise, I would not have known about these topics. Like I said, meeting new people, getting to know other places, I can explain or use those experiences that I have related to the context or the lessons that I'm teaching, because I know what I'm talking about, not just what the book is saying, or what the syllabus says that we should cover. Okay, we are covering, perhaps restaurants, of course there are restaurants here in Mexico, but using the context in the United States, using English provides a little more information that I can express to the students and explain that from a different point of view. (SSI5Abel-10)

Abel notices that having had direct contact with the United States culture helps him become more familiar with cultural aspects. This leads to him bringing in his own experiences and further explaining what the material is trying to say. As Abel believes, this may also lead to his students viewing things differently and taking a different point of view towards the United States culture.

Yesenia recalls making reference to festivities and holidays in the United States. Having the opportunity to bring in her material, she decides to refer to United States culture. She mentions:

Like the activities they do in schools, or the festivals they celebrate in the U.S., for example there are some holidays that, well obviously, they are not celebrated here, but they do celebrate them in the U.S. So since in school we do a monthly portrait, there I mention the holidays from the U.S., and some from Mexico, but since they already know, well they're supposed to know the Mexican ones, I only explain them very briefly and I focus more on the U.S. holidays. Every month we do that. (SSI6Yesenia-13)

Yesenia denotes making reference to festivities, particularly holidays from the United States to complete a task every month. Focusing rather briefly on the Mexican holidays, she mentions making further reference to the holidays from the United States.

Lorena also makes reference to her past experiences when living in the United States particularly when she can make reference to certain peculiarities. She describes:

For example, we talk about the weather. We talk about the perspective, how some people in the U.S., the concept they have of studying, of learning, how they set certain objectives, and they always search for the way to compete amongst them and reach that objective. So when we talk about those type of things, that is when I make reference about what I lived the time I was over there. (SSI8Lorena-10)

This ideology refers to that which people may have in the United States, how they compete amongst each other to reach a certain objective and how she lived certain experiences while in the United States.

Most participants recalled making reference to cultural aspects from the United States while going about in their teaching. Some referred to certain people, others referred to making reference to a more colloquial language usage, others referred to highlighting expectations for a certain purpose, others referred to opening up a different perspective, and others referred to making reference to certain aspects in particular. It seems that reminiscing past lived experiences in the United States may be something characteristic of these transnational English teachers. The following section discusses how the participants were viewed as being “different” and being “prepared” English teachers.

4.2.5.4 The “Different” and “Prepared” English Teacher

For all of the participants, several instances and lived experiences helped them become unique in a sense of being different than most English teachers. Transnational professional interactions can be understood in terms of network domains, across and within which professionals compete for position over who “knows well” (Seabrooke, 2014). For the transnational English teachers developing as professionals, aspects such as going about in

their teaching and their personality were seen as highly important in order to be viewed differently as English teachers. Several instances and lived experiences were recalled.

Oscar initially highlights what he notices in regards to English classes. His past experiences did not allow him to view such aspects of an ordinary English class. He provides the following:

Well...I have not really been like in a traditional English class, cause I didn't learn English that way, but from what I've seen in class and what I've learned in the BA, I guess it's mostly grammar translation, using the book, and the teacher is the source of all the knowledge, and I guess I just try to give them a little bit more freedom... (SS11Oscar-16)

Oscar seems to become aware of how many English classes work in a Mexican EFL context. He believes that he does not approach this practice because it is something that he is unfamiliar with. On the contrary, he believes that his teaching practice is a bit different. He complements by arguing that he feels a need to try out different things. He adds:

I think I still need to find that like, I feel comfortable trying different things. The way I don't feel comfortable is for example using the book all the time, or teaching grammar a lot, that's not my, my comfort zone. (SS11Oscar-28)

Oscar denotes that he feels comfortable experimenting with different activities inside the classroom, detaching himself from what he believes to be the traditional English class.

Yesenia also believes that her past learning experiences are reflected in how she goes about in her teaching practice. She recalls:

When I got to the U.S., I was taking classes for I guess migrating students, and they would teach me in a different school, so there I learned like some activities, or how can an English teacher work because they would be only English teachers, and the activities that they did were similar to the ones I saw here in the BA, and that's one thing that I think I got from over there. I also consider that another thing I got was like the parties they did, but seeing it in a way that you can like reward your students, and that's one thing I really liked about it, rewarding my students. (SS16Yesenia-9)

Yesenia discovered that the way she was taught English is similar to how she was taught to teach English; that is, she is aware of transferring lived student experiences to her teaching practices (Lortie, 1975). She also seems to adapt the way she was rewarded as a student to now reward her students.

Jessie also views his teaching as being different from others'. He believes that he does not have to follow what the rest of the teachers are doing. He mentions:

I always get good comments because I'm teaching and they're learning, because I'm not the ordinary teacher that just goes up to the classroom and says this is the tense, this is what we're going to see, blah blah blah, and just go ahead and do it now. I make sure that they know what I'm saying and they get the point of what

I'm saying. Like last week, we had a meeting like every month, and they said, okay well you have to finish the book, and I said I'm not going to finish the book, I don't want to finish it, we're only half way done with the book, but if you go to my classroom and you ask anything about the pages that I'm telling you, they're going to know every single page. If you go to a different classroom, with a complete book, I bet whatever you want that they're not going to know anything, that's my point of view though. (SSI7Jessie-27)

Jessie holds that covering more content does not necessarily lead to his students learning more content. He believes that by diving deeper into the content that is seen helps his students in knowing more of what has been covered, as opposed to those teachers who believe that they accomplish a given task by completing the book.

Lorena also believes for her teaching to be different from that of other teachers. She believes that she plays an important role in impacting her students' lives in a positive manner. She provides:

I am a teacher who really looks for my students to learn; however, I know that it is not completely my responsibility, because my students, I can look for ways to inspire them, but I can't motivate them to reach the objectives that I wish for them to reach, because those objectives are personal, and motivation is also personal, so as a teacher I try to inspire them, and I try to push them so they can be the best they can, because my objective is not so much transmit them some knowledge, but basically what I look for is to make a plan, make a change in their life, where I can contribute somehow for them to have positive changes that at a long run, it will make them become better people. (SSI8Lorena-18)

Other than just attempting to transmit knowledge on to her students, Lorena considers that her roles are also to inspire her students and contribute to helping them make changes in a positive way to become better people. Although these aspects rely mainly on the student, Lorena believes that she plays an important role in touching them in her classes.

Regarding the material she uses in her classes, Norma considers that she is more aware of what can work and what cannot work. She mentions:

I sometimes change it, and sometimes keep it as it is, it depends. If I think it works like it is, I'll leave it like that, and if I think it's not working, I would like change it a little bit, yeah, that's the way it works. (SSI9Norma-11)

Norma believes that she is capable of knowing when the material she is using in class is working and when it is not. She feels comfortable changing it when needed. This resulted from her past experiences. Norma complements with the following:

...I'm not the type of teacher that likes to bring a lot of material because in the past, I used to be this kind of teacher, like brings a lot of material, and then I saw that it didn't really work, so sometimes I do think that less is more. (SSI9Norma-12)

For Norma, being able to select and modify the material used in her classes resulted from past experiences of bringing in large amounts of material which she did not use or did not work as planned.

For participants such as Andrew, his view towards communication in the classroom is a result of his past lived experiences. He considers:

...I think that the experience of having to talk with people from many different countries also helps you be more patient with the struggles that your students have, because it's not that simple, and the point, the final point is to communicate, if you can do that, you're good. (SSI4Andrew-31)

Andrew believes that his past experiences communicating with people from different countries opened up his view towards the struggles that his students may have. This, in turn, helped him focus more on the communication aspect within his classes.

Abel holds a similar stance considering that his past lived experiences play an important role in his teaching. He notes:

...because I had the experience of traveling, knowing places, of interacting with people. I had to become more outgoing, be able to express better, and that has helped me here in Mexico to somehow implement those experiences into my classroom as much as I can. (SSI5Abel-7)

Similar to Andrew, Abel gives the communication aspect more importance. Having experienced the need to interact with others and having the need to express himself as best as possible, Abel believes that communication is rather important to promote in his classes.

From a more personal level, Jessie holds that his teaching is different than others' teaching because he likes what he is doing. He points out:

You're a teacher for a reason, and I want to become a good teacher because that's what I want. That's what I like, it's like my passion. Once I get to the classroom it's like something else. It's crazy when I'm doing the exams, when I'm checking the grades. I think that makes a difference, when you're doing something because you want to do it because you like it, because you love it, and the other teachers, they just go out there and go for the money. I think that is a big difference. (SSI7Jessie-34)

Although there are difficult aspects related to teaching that a teacher must go through such as grading, Jessie considers that what makes him different in the field of English teaching is that he actually likes and enjoys what he is doing. He believes that this is a noticeable difference as opposed to working just for the economic aspect.

All of the participants considered certain aspects that differentiate them from other teachers. Whether it is relying on past experiences, teaching what seems to be best, focusing on certain aspects, or going about in teaching because it is something that is enjoyed, these

teachers believe to be different than other teachers in certain aspects. Their past experiences as well as their experiences learning the language seem to be very important aspects in this process of viewing themselves differently in relation to other English teachers.

Likewise, some participants mentioned being viewed in a certain manner in their professional field due to the preparation they have in regards to English teaching. This preparation they have in the field helps them develop better as English teachers and also be viewed different from other teachers. Several instances were recalled.

Yesenia initially recalls how some people get interested in the degree that she has related to TESOL. She provides:

Because of studying the BA, once you go to an interview and they ask you what your BA is about, or what's your studies? And I tell them I'm studying to be an English teacher, so they get interested in it. (SSI6Yesenia-31)

Yesenia mentions being viewed as an English teacher who has education to develop in the English language teaching field. This initial information helps her become noticed by others and calls for attention to be drawn towards her.

Oscar seems to feel more prepared about going about in his teaching by having the opportunity to bring in additional material apart from the book to complement his classes. He notes:

I think now I have more knowledge as to what I'm actually doing, as to when I began teaching, I was just thrown out there, you figure it out. I had to figure it out pretty much based on what others told me and following the book, but now I think I have like that knowledge where I can decide what to do with my classroom and where to take it. (SSI1Oscar-35)

Oscar reminisces his initial teaching experiences in which he began teaching without much preparation. He recalls following the book and relying on what others told him. He now feels more prepared to make decisions based on what may be needed in his classes. Also, he believes that his education related to the field differentiates him from others who do not have an education related to the field. He states:

I would just tell you, I have an education in ELT. I did a BA, and I think that's one of the main things that differentiates us from the other teachers who don't have an education. It's just that, I went to school. (SSI1Oscar-37)

Similar to Yesenia, Oscar believes that having an education related to English teaching signals him out from other English teachers who do not have a similar education. He believes that being an English teacher with formal education in the field is an important aspect for him to be different than the rest.

Samuel views his educational preparation as a way for him to develop inside the classroom. He considers:

I want to say I'm an English teacher with the proper linguistics, with the proper usage of the language. I can provide an amount of examples for my learners. I put myself as an example for my learners to see what the book is trying to tell them, or what the activity is trying to make reference to the students. I put myself in that position, like this is an example, and I provide them, or if they want to provide, like they want to see a real life example, I would just explain well I lived and I went through this, and so forth. (SSI2Samuel-14)

For Samuel, his sense of being a prepared teacher relies on having a formal education on such field and also making reference to his past lived experiences. The combination of both may be seen as important elements for Samuel to be viewed as and feel a sense of being a prepared and more qualified English teacher.

For some participants, having a formal preparation regarding English teaching was an important factor for them to be viewed in a particular manner. Some participants mentioned relying on such to obtain a certain position at a work area, others to make decisions regarding their classes and to be viewed differently from others who do not have a similar education, and others to view themselves in the classroom based on having such preparation and bringing in their past lived experiences.

4.2.6 Conclusion

In this section, I will provide the reader with a summary of the obtained data. The results from the data obtained from the participants suggest the following:

Society and culture certainly do seem to play an important role in the identity construction process of these transnational English teachers. When constructing an identity, several identity types became present. This led to constructing a sense of different types of identities such as: a cultural identity, a self-identity, a social identity, a hybrid identity and a professional identity.

Initially, the participants all seemed to feel a sense of uniqueness with regard to other teachers who do not have the same background as them in the sense of being able to live a transnational lifestyle. How these different types of identities help construct a larger view of a socio-cultural identity for each of the transnational English teachers will be presented as follows:

For some participants, migrating between two different countries and residing at either for a specific period of time helped them construct a sense of an American identity, a Mexican identity, or an in-between identity. The notion of “culture” was also important to look at from the definition provided by the participants. In regards to constructing a self-identity, the participants’ view of themselves in a personal and a professional aspect were important to consider. In terms of constructing a social identity, the society in which the participants were surrounded by consisted mainly of students and colleagues, which viewed them in a particular manner. Certain difficult lived experiences seemed to be important in the process of constructing a social identity also. Concerning the construction of a hybrid identity amongst transnationals consisted in recalling how the participants react when encountering other transnationals and which characteristics they view as particular with regards to this group of people. Lastly, making reference to how the participants constructed a professional identity relied on having certain characteristics and viewing themselves differently than others in the field.

Chapter Five Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the conclusions of my research project will be presented. I will initially refer back to the research question that guided this research project, along with a summary of the findings. The implications of my research in the research site as well as my proposal for possible future research will be mentioned next. After, the limitations of the study carried out will be discussed. The chapter will end with a final conclusion.

5.2 Revisiting the Research Question

The ongoing migration between Mexico and the neighboring United States may lead to transnational experiences lived by transnationals. Once in Mexico, these transnationals may opt to become English teachers. For these transnationals, society and culture may play a vital role in how they construct and reconstruct their identity due to the direct exposure to both cultures. Several factors may have an effect in the process of identity construction and reconstruction of these transnationals within a Mexican EFL context. Society and culture seemed to play an important role for the participants of this research project in the construction and reconstruction of their cultural identity, self-identity, social identity, arriving to a broader understanding of the transnational English teacher, and their professional identity.

Once beginning this research, the following question was intended to be answered while guiding the research project:

*How do transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context
construct their identity based upon a socio-cultural perspective?*

Once concluding my research, the following sections present how I was able to answer my research question.

5.2.1 Migrating between two Nations in Constructing a Cultural Identity

Having the opportunity to migrate between two different countries, both the United States and Mexico, and having the opportunity to reside on both for a specific period of time

helped the participants become attached to a particular nation, detached to another, or feel a sense of belonging between the two. The participants' lived understandings helped them obtain more cultural understanding of both nations in which they were able to live. For some participants, the American culture played a major role in adapting to that culture, enabling them to create a sense of an American cultural identity. Other participants found a stronger connection towards the Mexican culture, creating a stronger Mexican cultural identity. There were also those participants who felt related to both cultures, being unsure about which culture to relate to more, or feeling equally belonging to one culture over the other.

5.2.2 One's Own Experiences in Constructing a Self-Identity

For some participants, their past helped them arrive to an understanding of how they view themselves considering their experiences migrating to and living within the United States. For other participants, those lived experiences helped them view themselves in a particular manner being submerged in a professional field. In this sense, whether the participants get a broader understanding of who they are as individuals or as teachers within a professional field, their past livelihoods help them reminisce their autobiography in order for them to view themselves in a particular manner.

5.2.3 Society in Constructing a Social Identity

The opportunities that the participants had in migrating across borders between both the United States and Mexico allowed them to become exposed to and be in contact with different social groups, as well as educational experiences. This led to the construction of a social identity. The surrounding society and the professional work environment functioned as the main institutions to impregnate a sense of social belonging amongst the participants. For some participants, the social environment played a stronger role at a more personal level, while for others this impacted at the professional level. Regarding the social identity embedded within the professional environment, some participants constructed a sense of a "good" and "prepared" English teacher upon perspectives raised by the participants through the interaction carried out with their colleagues and students. Elements, such as having an understanding of where the participants acquired the language, assumptions of linguistic competence and proficiency, portrayed language usage, and certain preferences towards

characteristics within English teachers, were vital to consider in gaining awareness of how the professional environment helped view the participants as having certain peculiarities as they develop as English teachers.

5.2.4 Transnational Experiences in Constructing the Transnational English Teacher

The migrating transitions of the participants related to crossing the border and living in both the United States and Mexico allowed them to become aware of others who also lived similar experiences. This led the participants to constructing the identity of those who share similar migrating experiences as themselves, and whom they may refer to as transnationals. The linguistic abilities of others with transnational experiences helped the participants identify and relate to other transnationals. The linguistic competence and performance of other transnationals were key features in identifying them as transnationals. Several aspects were crucial for the participants to better identify people with similar transnational experiences relying on their linguistic characteristics. These aspects are: having an accent, relying on a more colloquial linguistic variation, speaking in a more fluent manner, being able to use different variations, having a more open mind about the language and its production, and being able to acquire English within the United States.

5.2.5 Social Networks in Forming Small Cultures and Communities of Practice

Encountering others with similar lived experiences resulted in reminiscing such past. Whether a conversation was held making reference to a certain activity, a past lived experience, or about certain preferences, the participants seemed to have found it relatively easy to hold a conversation with someone else who lived a similar past and whom the participants could connect to. Having the opportunity to do so, some participants were able to arrive to the formation of small cultures regarding their past experiences. For other participants, gathering with and maintaining interaction with those who share similar interests lead to the formation of communities of practice. For the formation of either small cultures or communities of practice, a past migrating experience between the United States and Mexico seemed to be the pillar for such relationships to come about.

5.2.6 The Professional Field in Constructing a Professional Identity

Being able to develop within a professional atmosphere, some participants made reference to arriving to a construction of a professional identity. The participants' colleagues, as well as their students, were the main people involved in such construction, allowing the participants to become more aware and view themselves in a certain manner. Several factors played an important role in constructing this type of identity.

The portrayed linguistic abilities of the participants were an initial element in the construction of their professional identity. The cultural knowledge and experiences of the participants were vital in order for them to portray themselves in a particular way through the use of language. The students of the participants also found it interesting that their English teacher learned the English language within the United States. This characteristic was able to be perceived by the students of the participants by a noticeable pronunciation from their teachers. Also, for some participants, having a teacher as an influence helped them strive to develop as English teachers. This, in turn, also led the participants to relate to the United States culture when going about in their teaching practice by making reference to their transnational epistemologies. This was done so by referencing certain people, implementing a more colloquial language usage within the students, highlighting certain expectations for particular scenarios, and providing an alternative perspective of an English language learning context. The afore-mentioned elements helped the participants view themselves as unique and different than other English teachers and be perceived as good role models.

Other than having the opportunity to develop within formal English teaching preparation, the participants were also able to rely on their past lived experiences to connect to others with similar characteristics and be viewed differently than those who do not portray similar characteristics. This led the participants to rely on the social and cultural perspectives to initially view themselves in a certain manner, and later view that they share experiences with others who may have a similar past.

5.3 Probable Interest for Researchers

Research on transnationalism and transnationals continues to be quite scarce in Mexico as it tends to focus on the United States context (Petron, 2009). Much of the focus has been on transnationals living within borderlands areas, and there is much to do with transnationals

who either return to their homeland or migrate to a new location to settle permanently (Petron, 2003, 2009; Petron & Greybeck, 2014).

Little research has been done considering the migration phenomena in Mexico (Egea Jiménez, Nieto Calmaestra & Jiménez Bautista, 2002; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009; Zúñiga, Hamann, & Sánchez García, 2008). There has also been little research carried out regarding the migration phenomena in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico (Lamy & Rodríguez Ortiz, 2011; Lamy, 2015), and even less research on the educational field (Avilés Hernández & Mora Pablo, 2014).

Nonetheless, recent research has touched upon the transnational phenomena of those who migrate back to Mexico and opt to develop as teachers of the English language (Mora Pablo, Lengeling, & Basurto Santos, 2015; Mora Pablo, Lengeling, Rivas Rivas, Basurto Santos, & Villareal Ballestros, 2015; Mora Pablo, Rivas Rivas, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2015; Mora Pablo, Frausto Hernández, & Rangel Gamiño, 2016; Rivas Rivas, 2013; Trejo Guzmán, Mora Vázquez, Mora Pablo, Lengeling, & Crawford, 2016).

Although great emphasis has been given to the transnationalism phenomena within central Mexico, particularly within the State of Guanajuato, this research thesis can contribute to expand this field of interest in Mexico. The results and findings of this thesis may be of interest for researchers who are or wish to become interested in topics such as transnationalism, identity, TESOL-related areas, small cultures and communities and practice, and how the socio-cultural theory gave this research a theoretical perspective as a lens to approach from. Certainly, society and culture play an important role in how one constructs identity, how one relates to others, and how others view one considering transnational migrating experiences. The results of this thesis show how social and cultural factors play an important role in how transnational student-teachers at a large public university in central Mexico construct their identity and are viewed by others, as well as how they go about in their English teaching practice relying on their past lived experiences. This thesis can help give a glimpse of how social and cultural factors are vital in constructing identity from a personal, a social, and a professional level.

5.4 Implications for the Academic Field

The transnationalism phenomena leads to the formation of transnationals. It is noteworthy to highlight that some incidents may arise due to the use of the language that transnationals may rely upon, along with the conflict of not fully identifying themselves with a particular culture at times. Nonetheless, having the opportunity to develop within transnational practices offers a vast range of cultural elements which one can become attached to and feel identified with. These experiences may help teachers relate to their past experiences as transnationals while approaching more familiar topics within their teaching practice.

These people are afforded an important cultural capital, which can also be portrayed through their English language instruction as English teachers. Understanding the role that society and culture may play within the process of transnationalism can help gain a broader understanding of how these people view themselves and are viewed by others, and why and how they are able to rely on their past lived experiences to bring such into their teaching practice. These elements may be observed while in the processes of constructing and/or reconstructing identity. It is pertinent for teachers and students within the TESOL/EFL context to become aware of these teachers and the valuable cultural knowledge that they possess and may bring into the language learning classroom.

5.5 Limitations

Several possible limitations can be found concerning the development of this thesis project. An initial possible limitation was the number of participants. The total amount of transnational student-teachers at the research site was considered, out of which only nine accepted to be part of the study. Although a large amount of raw data was obtained by part from the participants, I believe that a larger amount of participants would have resulted in more information to compare and contrast or strengthen that information provided by others.

Another possible limitation was the number of data gathering techniques used throughout the data collection process. I relied only on the implementation of semi-structured interviews. Alternative techniques such as questionnaires, narratives and observations could have helped expand the topics, clarify them, and provide the opportunity for triangulation to take place concerning the several techniques to be implemented to each participant.

Another possible limitation was the time constraint. As the educational program has a set of fixed guidelines for each class, an established time frame was presented to fulfill with certain advances within this research project. This allowed for the thesis to be carried out as presented.

5.6 Future Research

Having analyzed the information obtained from the data gathering process, several topics arose. From such topics, I was able to explore how society and culture play an important role in how transnational English teachers in a Mexican EFL context develop as such, how they view themselves, and how they are viewed by others. Though I was able to arrive to these findings, I consider pertinent to perform further research in the future. The findings of this research may be considered momentary.

As society and culture are in constant evolution, a similar research project can be done in a couple of years to explore whether or not and to what extent transnational English teachers within a Mexican EFL context construct and reconstruct their identity and develop in their teaching practice. Within such suggestion, research may be carried out with more techniques to gather data to allow for triangulation of it and submerge further into the teaching practices of teachers with these characteristics. Also, research may be done focusing on the interaction that takes place within transnational English teachers and their students (such as the languaging practices within the ELT field). Future research may also lean more towards exploring transnational students within a Mexican educational system, their struggles, as well as their adaptation processes. It would also be crucial to explore varying degrees of transnationalism that transnationals may engage in concerning their migrating experiences and their sense of attachment to either culture.

5.7 Final Conclusion

Engaging within transnational practices and identifying myself as a transnational helped me relate more to other transnationals. The current political climate may play a significant role in how these people engage in migration practices. Nonetheless, transnationalism is a phenomenon which has been, and will continue to be, part of both the United States and Mexican history due to the immediacy of both neighboring countries. This

may result in the formation of transnational communities who come together with the purpose of engaging in and mutually exchanging their past lived experiences as transnationals. Within this process of engaging in and exchanging their experiences with others, transnationals may decide to develop as English language teachers due to their dominance of the English language obtained as a result of their migration experiences and living within the United States for a substantial amount of time. This aids in these transnationals to construct the way they view themselves from a personal, cultural, social, and professional perspective.

A particular group of student-teachers with the vital characteristic of having engaged in transnational experiences within a specific context was focused on for this research project. The use of semi-structured interviews helped obtain information from the experiences the participants lived as transnationals migrating between both Mexico and the United States. The time spent within the United States varied from participant to participant, as well as their purposes for migrating to Mexico and the time spent in the latter country; yet, they all had significant experiences regarding their migration between both cultures.

The determination of focusing on this group of transnational student-teachers was with the aim of understanding their identity construction process from a socio-cultural perspective developing as English teachers in a Mexican EFL context. Several aspects led to the construction and reconstruction of different facets of identity in which the socio-cultural environment played a major role: residing on both the United States and Mexico for a certain amount of time and becoming attached to a particular nation over another and gaining a broader cultural understanding of both, reminiscing their autobiography and implementing such into their professional teaching practice, constructing a sense of a “good” and “prepared” English teacher upon perspectives noticed by the colleagues and students of the participants, being able to relate to others with a similar migrating background, clustering together with others who shared similar experiences and preferences to form small cultures and communities of practice, relying on their past in order to go about in their teaching, and being able to portray themselves differently from other English teachers who did not have the opportunity to engage in migration experiences as transnationals, or whom did not have the experience to be in direct contact with the United States and be able to learn the language there. This led the participants to rely on their personal, social, and cultural perspectives to initially arrive to an understanding of themselves in a particular manner, and later arrive to

an understanding of how others within their social environment are able to view them upon having similar past lived experiences or not.

I believe that society and culture helped the participants initially understand themselves, so that they were then able to relate to others and arrive to an understanding of how they are viewed by their social environment. Though not all of the participants are fully aware of their identity or a facet of the encompassing identities, the construction and reconstruction of such may be in constant change considering where the person is, who the person is communicating with, and the experiences that he or she is living, which in turn may result in relating more towards a particular social group, and reconstructing their identity.

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Appendix A Letter of Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Dear Participant:

I, hereby, give my permission to Isaac Frausto Hernández to use gathered information from questionnaires, conversations, observations, interviews (structured, semi-structured and/or unstructured), journals, and/or any other data gathering technique for the purpose of completing a research project for an MA Thesis in his MA degree level studies (MLAEI) at the University of Guanajuato.

I have been notified that the obtained information is confidential and will be used specifically for research purposes.

The project includes an analysis of transnationals and how their identity is constructed by how they are viewed by their colleagues and students.

If I wish to remain anonymous and be given a pseudonym, I will provide this by checking the corresponding segment below.

I am aware that privacy and confidentiality are highly important. This research may extend beyond the process of data collection and the completion of the thesis project and may be presented on article publications, congresses and academic forums; therefore, any information is highly confidential.

If any doubt or question arises in regards to the research project, please contact Isaac Frausto Hernández at isaacfhdz@gmail.com.

I give my consent in participating and allowing Isaac Frausto Hernández to obtain, manage and work with the data I may provide.

I would like to remain anonymous: Yes _____ No _____

Name and Signature

Date

E-mail address

Appendix B Semi-structured Interview Questionnaire and Follow-up Questions

Semi-structured interview questionnaire

- Which aspects of the United States can you relate to the most and why?
- Which aspects of Mexico can you relate to the most and why?
- What experiences can you recall because of your migrating experiences between Mexico and the United States?
- What type of knowledge do you think you obtained from migrating between both countries?
- How do you believe you implement this knowledge into your teaching practice?
- How do you view yourself as an English teacher in Mexico considering your migrating experiences to the United States?
- How are you viewed as an English teacher by your students and colleagues as they are aware of your migrating experience to the United States?

Follow-up questions

- Could you describe...?
- Could you elaborate more on...?
- How did such make you feel?
- What do you refer to?
- What do you mean by...?
- Could you provide an example?